Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-FIVE • NUMBER SIX • JUNE 1988

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MARK FALCOFF

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ELIE KEDOURIE

Three Books

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"Glasnost," the KGB, and the "Nation"

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A Failed Musical Genius

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Books in Review: Edward Alexander/David Brock/ Richard John Neuhaus/George Russell/Stephen Peter Rosen

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Letters from Readers

American Jews & Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

With its timely February symposium, "American Jews and Israel," COMMENTARY provided the American Jewish community with an invaluable service. Many of the respondents demonstrated by their replies that Jews view the state of Israel in terms that transcend standard categories of political discourse; this lent the symposium a particular depth. As a result, the February issue resonated with ethical and theological assertions of the validity of a Jewish state. . . .

DAVID HORWITZ
Flushing, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I think the symposium is so important it should be reproduced in pamphlet or paperback form and distributed to all college libraries and reading rooms in the land. . . .

[Colonel] HARRY C. KEENEY, U.S. Army [Ret.]
Lebanon, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have been a regular subscriber to COMMENTARY for at least two decades and wish to congratulate you for bringing a breath of fresh air that clears the atmosphere . . . created by self-hating Jews, leftists, and other enemies of the Jewish people. . . .

IRVING MOSKOWITZ
Miami Beach, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In the COMMENTARY symposium I looked in vain for a sustained appeal to Zionism as a theory of Jewish existence, let alone to Zionist issues and perspectives. Most participants write as if the state of Israel were a merely contemporary event, lacking all intellectual roots in the history of Judaism and of the Jewish people, lacking all consequence for Judaism and the Jewish people today: a merely political entity, which we are "for." That is a tragic, because shallow, perspective.

Contemplating the state of Israel without the Zionist perspective trivializes the most momentous event in the history of Judaism since the destruction of the Second Temple. I say "Judaism," not merely the Jewish people. On the list of momentous events are other political changes of a fundamental order, e.g., the development of a bifurcated Jewishness in the 19th and 20th centuries; but this is far more important, because Zionism through the creation of the Jewish state forms the first and sole reunification of Jewish existence on a new and other foundation than the familiar one of the dual Torah. The urgent and critical issue of contemporary Judaic thought can only be the Zionist challenge, and a measure of our own limitations is that we have not sustainedly addressed it.

JACOB NEUSNER
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . It was comforting to note that only six of the forty-nine contributors to your symposium (12 percent) . . . supported the right of American Jews to criticize Israeli policy even though it pertains to Israeli security. In contrast to their philosophy, Murray Friedman of the remaining forty-three put it best when he wrote, "The rule to guide us generally, it seems to me, is whether the issue involves the safety and security of the state. Israelis who have to live with the day-to-day results of actions taken by their government to protect them must be left free to make their decisions without public pressure from their brethren abroad."

I myself, as a somewhat prolific writer of letters to the TV networks and the press about issues relating to Israel, have religiously avoided criticizing Israel's government when I felt its decisions have not been in the interests of its people and security. I believe it is vital to avoid giving enemies of Israel in the American media (many with long records of bias against the Jewish state) and in our government (mainly the executive branch) any ammunition against Israel beyond what they fabricate in artful ways that many Americans do not realize. . . .

LAWRENCE I. GOULD
Beachwood, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . What can American Jews (or non-Jews, for that matter) do that would assure a peaceful solution to the vexing problems confronting

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the Middle East? Surely it is not more negative criticism that Israel needs now. As a kind of American outpost in that troubled, oil-rich region, Israel exerts a stabilizing influence. It is moral support, therefore, that is called for, not carping. . . . Left alone by the so-called superpowers, the contending regional parties should be encouraged to sit down and, to quote Lyndon Johnson, "reason together." . . . After all, we do not live there, as Midge Decter points out in her symposium contribution. What right do we have, therefore, to give gratuitous advice that no one asks or calls for? . . .

HENRY REGENSTEINER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

During my last visit to Israel, I was again reassured by the sight of Jews carrying arms. I only wished that we, the Jews of Europe, had had arms when we were mercilessly and methodically slaughtered, while the uncaring world looked on.

Upon my return, I was shaken out of my complacency by the organized riots in Gaza and the West Bank, but even more so by the outpouring of invective from Jews, directed against Israel. (Attacks from non-Jews come to me, a survivor, as no surprise. . . .)

Your symposium is timely and very much needed. The responses restored, to some degree, my trust in the basic integrity of American Jews, if not in the wisdom of some of their so-called leaders. There were no surprises in the names of the moralists and op-ed writers who spoke out publicly against Israel. Have these Jeremiahs on the Hudson—the rabbis, social leaders, *apparatchiks* running the organizations, film-makers, and others without a discernible label— forgotten the lessons of Jewish history? . . .

They forget that Israel is not America. True, the majority, if not all, of these moralists are also against any effort by this country to defend its (and their) rights by force. Still, America is a mighty country which will survive their attacks. But when they call for Israel's surrender they forget that Israel, a tiny country surrounded by hordes of implacable enemies in wait for their version of the Final Solution, may not survive. . . .

I can feel compassion for the young Arab boys and girls who are sent to be maimed and sometimes killed by their insidious elders, but I must also remember that those who throw stones today will be ready to arrange for tomorrow's *Kristallnacht*. . . .

SAMUEL LIPA TENNENBAUM
West Orange, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I wish that your symposium had included a contribution from a non-Jew like me, but a writing one. William F. Buckley, Jr.? George Will? Where are the Gentiles who see the dirt being done to Israel and who protest to *their* flocks?

I never want to hear another well-wisher propose that Israel "trade territory for peace." Has nobody a map? Israel is fresh out of Sinais to trade, and it did not get its territory's worth of peace for that bargain.

I do not want to hear any more about Israel's higher obligations until someone teaches me about another state that does or ever did meet the standards of Israel's critics. . . .

WINIFRED SCOTT
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I enjoyed reading your symposium in the February issue, . . . and I particularly agreed with Gertrude Himmelfarb's distinction between criticism of the internal affairs of Israel and criticism on issues affecting its very existence. The status of the West Bank is a grave and serious matter to Israel, and those of us who have chosen not to live there should be very careful about passing judgment on these potential life-and-death issues for Israelis.

I do think, however, that Israel's system of proportional representation—whereby groups with minute followings have the ability to veto certain actions of the government —should be changed. That system may be appropriate for countries like Belgium or the Netherlands, but it is not appropriate for Israel, which is surrounded by enemies and . . . needs a strong leadership which will be innovative and creative in dealing both with its neighbors and with the occupied territories. . . .

Israel simply cannot conduct its affairs properly under its present system of electing its national parliament.

PHILIP J. SCHILLER
Chicago, Illinois

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To the Editor of Commentary:

Thank you for your symposium on American Jewish attitudes toward Israel. I would urge those who indulge in nostalgia for Israel's first two decades to take a more objective view of those early years.

From its rebirth in 1948 until 1967, Israelis were subjected to government control unseen anywhere outside of the Communist world. The Labor party controlled housing, jobs, education, industry, agriculture, communications, transportation, medicine, and all social institutions. Government censors forbade television, monitored all entertainment, and limited broadcasts to patriotic songs, sermons, and speeches. Bureaucracy became bloated and "*protektsia*," a system of petty bribery, proliferated. Sephardi Jews performed menial and blue-collar jobs and Labor party leaders assumed it would take generations for them to catch up to Western Jews. . . .

The fact that people as feisty as the Israelis submitted to this rigid government control is testament to their zeal for building a state.

In addition to exerting influence, Israel's early leaders were a dour and humorless lot, who indulged in self-righteous preening, gladly echoed by Israel's American supporters. It is no wonder that this endless moralizing led to Israel's being judged by a double standard.

I visited Israel last fall after an absence of twenty-seven years. I found it to be better than ever—more diverse, more interesting, more pluralistic, endlessly debating its course, and, despite the danger, much more fun to live in. The Labor party's iron grip has been shattered, Sephardi Jews participate fully in every aspect of political and professional life, and competition and enterprise are thriving.

If a visitor avoids the Jerusalem *Post*, academics, and urban professionals, he will meet Israel's real citizens—patriotic, down-to-earth, realistic, and tolerant, without the moral posturing. Israel is what all real Zionists ever hoped for—a Jewish state, with a strong army, whose citizens are willing and able to ensure its survival on their own terms.

Ruth S. King

New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand lose its cunning." Not one of your symposiasts invoked so primal a sentiment, though there were faint echoes from a few. Instead, it was all (somewhat monotonously) democracy worth our support, dependable ally, remarkable achievement when viewed by reasonable standards, Jewish refuge after the Holocaust, etc. etc. And yet, how could it be otherwise? For we are Americans, are we not, before we are Jews? Assimilation is a fact. How many of your symposiasts are the products of intermarriage? Or have taken a Gentile spouse? How many have children who are Jews by religious law? And even if unambiguous "ethnic Jews," how many are irreligious? . . .

What does it mean to be Jewish to those who are only slightly distinguished from their countrymen by mild ethnic or religious attachment? Are we defined by the experience or threat of anti-Semitism: Hitler would have killed me, therefore I must express solidarity not based on a common or unique culture? Or is it, indeed, a sort of familial tie, through one's grandparents or great-grandparents—in which case, what do Ashkenazi Jews have to do with Sephardim, absent a strong religious tie? . . .

I too love democracy, and am alarmed by religious fanaticism. I wish Israel to be a modern, democratic nation. . . . And yet . . ., finally, the future of Israel is with the Likud, its atavistic impulses held in check by a vigorous Labor opposition. This is not merely a fact of electoral demographics, but of historic necessity. Israel does not make enough sense to survive internal strains and external threats without a vigorous Jewish nationalism—and a vigorous Jewish nationalism makes little sense unless it is based on the ancient history of the children of Israel, the informing stories which bind all Jews who choose to take that identity in some way seriously. The interpretation of these stories need not be strictly religious. But there is no "Jewish people" not in some sense rooted in the Exodus from Egypt, the establishment of prophetic monotheism, the promise of Davidic kingship, the experience of exile. The Holocaust is of limited utility in providing a sufficient sense of national identity. As long as the United States exists, can anyone say that there is greater security and opportunity for Jews in Tel Aviv than in Brooklyn? . . .

The future is Likud because there is little reason to put up with the realities of Israeli life if Israel is merely a Western outpost. Only those who love *Eretz Yisrael*, the land of Israel, will have the stomach to endure. Those of us who love *Eretz Yisrael* faintly, romantically, not in the gut, stay where we are, not forgetting Jerusalem, yet not living there, either. . . .

Michael David Blume

Annapolis, Maryland

To the Editor of Commentary:

I read Commentary's symposium on American Jews and Israel with a mixture of sadness and hope. Sadness, because I find it depressing to witness Jews again huddled, as it were, passively awaiting bleak news from abroad. Hope, because at least this time it is only American Jews who remain relatively inert. . . . Israelis have some real control over their fate, hence, ultimately, over ours, since the fate of all Jews is bound up, in my view, indissolubly. Notwithstanding any legitimate criticism that can or has been made of past or present Israeli policy, I find that to be cause for comfort. If any people can survive and prosper in this world, it is surely the Israelis.

But I think the coming task for American Jews as a community is to face up to the increasingly strong likelihood that Israel will be forced into stern actions vis-à-vis the Arabs, exceeding anything necessary to date, actions that will outrage much of the world, including American public and government opinion, and perhaps risk an outright breach with the United States. Broaching this subject is a terrible act, fraught with all sorts of horrific associations. . . . But to be blunt: with the "Jordanian option" apparently fading (and perhaps overrated to begin with) and Palestinian Arab demands and expectations almost certain to remain impossibly high, Israel may have to contemplate an eventual war of expulsion.

Even if outright expulsion is ruled out, Israel may have to consider a modified Kahanism, making life sufficiently miserable for the Arab population that large numbers will leave the country. The alternative of an Israel, with or without a Jewish majority, containing four or five million irreconcilably nationalistic Palestinians in a generation or so is plain enough, and almost surely unacceptable.

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It is not sufficient for American Jews to say they will trust in whatever Israel develops. We have a responsibility to do our part to prepare American opinion for the eventuality. It would be irresponsible to ignore it until the last minute, even if it is arguably premature, not to say distracting, to raise it now. One need only reflect on the uproar created early on in the riots by the mere deportation of four Arab agitators—one prominent American Jew compared it to the Hitler deportations—to recognize how vast is the task. . . .

The alternative of a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the territories will no doubt be the popularly preferred position. . . . Needless to say, such a decision is solely Israel's to make and urging it carries no social or political risk whatsoever for American Jews. But suggesting that Israel may have to expel the Arabs does entail risk. Today it remains unacceptable. Whether it becomes more acceptable, or at least understandable, in the future, depends on the willingness of American Jews to deal with it as directly as possible, from both a moral and strategic perspective. . . .

SETH A. HALPERN
Scarsdale, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Your February symposium makes for interesting reading, but more important than the attitudes toward Israel of Jewish intellectuals are the attitudes and feelings of the general Jewish public. . . . The vast majority of concerned Jews take their cue from the organizations in which they are active and follow the "line" expounded by their leaders. How these leaders would have responded to the symposium questions would therefore have been a better barometer of how Jews generally feel. And since Israel's future and Jewish security are tied to American political goals, it would have been still more meaningful to learn how the growing number of Jews elected to public office, especially to Congress, might have responded to the symposium questions.

One thing is clear, however. We are far from reaching a consensus as to how we can best ensure Israel's future and that of the Jewish people regardless of where they live. . . .

HYMAN H. HAVES
Pacific Palisades, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

We have been subscribers to COMMENTARY since it began publishing because we admired your reasonableness and your high level of integrity in journalism. It was therefore with great dismay and bewilderment that we read your . . . February issue. The timing of your symposium could not have been worse, and there could not have been a less intelligent choice of contributors.

How many of your philosophers and journalists were victims of the Holocaust, or children of such survivors? (Our family contains many.) How many of them went to Israel to drain the swamps, plant the fields, and fight in the wars? (One medical colleague of ours, age sixty-five, has flown to Israel to serve in the army medical corps at the outbreak of every war.) How many of them are parents who search the fields (as a nephew of ours does) after each battle to find wounded or slain children? . . . How easy it is to live in the safest and richest country in the world and from this cozy nest to pontificate on what Israel should and should not do!

When Lincoln was attacked for his conduct of the Civil War in August 1862, he responded with clarity and force, "I do what I do because I believe it helps to save this Union."

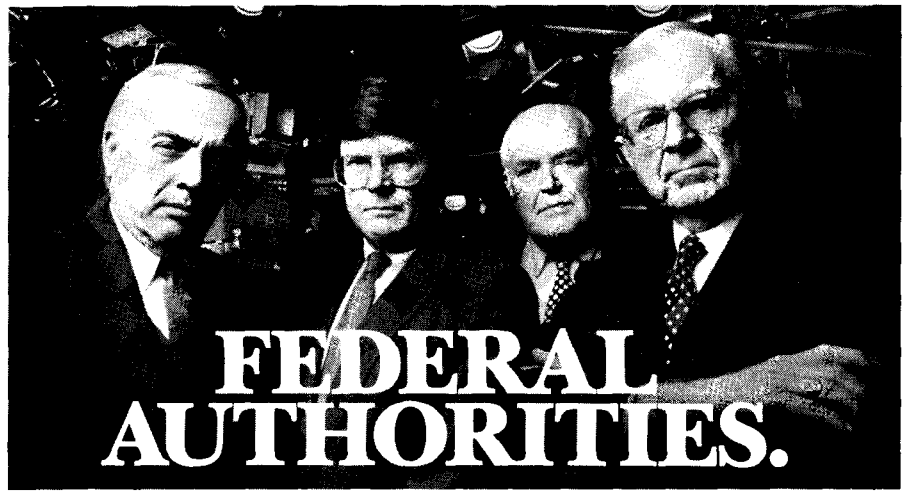
Fifty, nay, twenty-five years from now, the world will little care or remember what your . . . intellectuals said, but the fate of world Jewry will be decided by what happens to Israel today.

RUTH K. SCHOENBERG
MAX SCHOENBERG
West Palm Beach, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Having just received your February issue with the "Four Questions" symposium (which reminds me somehow of the introductory questions of the Haggadah), I should like to ask another four questions (it being said that Jews are sometimes in the habit of answering questions with other questions).

1. Is moral and/or financial support from American Jews enough (fair criticism included), or should this support find its expression in full personal commitment—i.e., *aliyah*? . . .



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2. What are Jews living abroad doing about the fact that the substance of Jewry is being constantly and "silently" reduced, albeit in a nonviolent way, by assimilation, acculturation, and intermarriage? . . . Does this state of affairs worry them?

3. Is the Return to Zion in all its implications merely a political and rational matter, or does it also have *meaning in the realm of metaphysics* and eschatology?

4. To what extent should the attitude of the Gentile world determine basic Jewish attitudes and beliefs? (I am reminded of what Ben-Gurion said during one of Israel's critical periods: "What matters is not what the Gentiles will say, but what the Jews will do.")

In conclusion, may I say that I was born in Germany and have lived in Israel for almost fifty-two years—without ever having taken a "day off" abroad.

PEREZ TURA

Rehovot, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

COMMENTARY is to be thanked for its symposium on American Jewish attitudes toward Israel in the 1980's. Many important questions are raised by . . . this symposium, but some equally important questions are left out.

COMMENTARY is rightfully known and respected for bringing out unspoken truths and unfashionable views. But your choice of respondents to the symposium questionnaire shows you have surrendered —by omission—to a malady common to both American Jewish and Israeli society.

Where in your symposium is the voice of those American Jewish supporters of Israel who have acted on their beliefs and come to Israel on *aliyah*, thereby becoming full partners in its challenges and its fate? If, by moving to Israel, these individuals have placed themselves beyond the scope of your symposium—and of American Jewry in general—this situation raises yet other questions.

Where are we to look in order to find the real leadership of pro-Zionist American Jewry? If, as one symposium participant wrote, it is the right of all American Jews to help put the Jewish "house" in order—and I agree that Israel is house and home to all Jews—would it not be reasonable to hear the voice of those who have gone to live in this house? . . .

The dialogue between today's American Jews and their brethren who now live in Israel should be actively enhanced for the benefit of the Jewish people as a whole.

ORRIN PERSKY

Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Does COMMENTARY mean to imply in the symposium's opening statement that to criticize Israeli government policies openly is to delegitimize and attack the state itself? Can this be the "hidden agenda" Daniel Bell challenged you to reveal? Further, I wonder about the "mix" of your respondents, and the process of their selection. . . .

Some respondents explained the keen disappointments about Israel increasingly observable in the American Jewish community as due to the pernicious influence of the political Left. Others stressed the prevalence at Israel's birth of utopian, perfectionist, or messianic expectations impossible of realization. Important as both these factors undoubtedly have been, they are very far from telling the whole story. . . .

As regards changes in attitude, one must keep in mind that over the years . . . an increasing number of American Jews have become knowledgeable about the Israeli scene. . . . They have come to know Israel as a living, operational organism, warts and all. This had to lead to a sobering of attitudes, to disappointments, and to criticism.

As regards expectations, it was not unreasonable to expect that Israel's economic policies over the years would be responsible rather than opportunistic, short-sighted, and debilitating. It was also not unreasonable to expect that Israel's basic political, social, and religious policies would reflect the majority will, and not be held hostage . . . by small religious minorities whose swing vote in successive coalition cabinets gives them an effective veto over the majority will. And it was also not unreasonable to expect that Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and secular Jews would be able to live with one another in mutual tolerance rather than sharp discord. These dashed expectations were not utopian, perfectionist, or messianic.

Finally, as regards public criticism of Israel: American Jewish leaders (organization leaders, not intellectuals) have always been able to voice their doubts and criticisms to Israeli leaders. They avoided open criticism for more than three decades (and many still do), but they were not taken seriously until some of them began to voice their uneasiness and criticisms in public. It is not surprising that the intellectuals who contributed to your symposium seem oblivious of this reality, since it is not they to whom the Israelis have turned for money, or for assistance in influencing the White House, the Congress, and the media. For these purposes, the Israelis have turned to the leadership of Jewish organizational life, with large followings or memberships . . .

Criticism by these leaders therefore is not criticism from the sidelines or from lofty observational posts. . . . When occasionally, as invited "partners," they do not see eye-to-eye with an Israeli government, and find that no weight is attached to their private advice or warnings, what is left for them to do? . . .

LOUIS J. WALINSKY

Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

After reading the symposium in the February issue of COMMENTARY I should like to offer three observations. First, if any Gentile were to criticize the state of Israel as it is now being criticized by many Jewish liberals, such a person would be denounced as a reincarnation of Julius Streicher. Second, something must be very wrong with Judaism in the United States when so many wealthy and privileged Jewish people are anti-Israel, anti-American, and anti-Western. Third, the only reliable Gentile supporters of the state of Israel in the United States are fundamentalist Christians who are reliable because their perceptions of the real world are not befuddled by liberal mythology.

[Reverend] ROLAND THORWALDSEN

Saint Stephen's Parish

Beaumont, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In your February symposium, Lionel Abel says: "I do not believe the assertion of Arthur Hertzberg that in 1967 Israel was ready to take on the whole world, and I am very much afraid that reckless assertions of this sort may lead to the whole world taking on Israel." Mr. Abel's moralizing is based on an untruth. I challenge him to produce such a quotation from any of the many essays that I have written about Israel in the last forty years.

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I suspect what lies behind his unfortunate error is a lapse of memory. In an article in the *New York Review of Books* last June, I quoted a boast by General Ariel Sharon, in the euphoria after 1967, when he claimed that Israel had become the third military power in the world outranked only by the United States and the Soviet Union. If Mr. Abel thinks that such a remark is recklessly grandiloquent, then he has problems with General Sharon and not with me.

[Rabbi] Arthur Hertzberg
Dartmouth College
Hanover, New Hampshire

Lionel Abel writes:

Arthur Hertzberg complains of "untruth"—or at the very least, of "unfortunate error"—in the version I gave of his views on Israel, and has challenged me to provide him with a quotation from his writings. Now I shall do no less, and in doing so perhaps teach a man who is a rabbi one of the very sad facts of life—namely, that we sometimes do not know what we have actually said until this is told us by another, and maybe by someone not wishing us well.

That Rabbi Hertzberg is uncertain about what he actually wrote is clear to me from his mention of "forty years of writing" on Israel and his suggestion that I may have been influenced by a remark of General Sharon's cited by him in a June issue of the *New York Review of Books*. Perhaps Rabbi Hertzberg means his article of May 28, 1987 entitled "Israel: The Tragedy of Victory" (there is no article by him in the *New York Review of Books* in June 1987). The May article is my source. It contains no mention of General Sharon's boast. It does contain, among other remarks to which I took great exception, his expression of regret for Israel's victory. It would have been so much better, according to Rabbi Hertzberg, if the fighting had ended in a draw!

This article, which I think justified what I wrote, is from beginning to end an indictment of Israel, its leaders, and the American Jews influenced by them. And for what? For defying the world. My charge was, of course, a summary of many statements in the piece, but before I come to the decisive quote I was challenged to provide, let me cite an example of Rabbi Hertzberg's thought on Israeli hubris:

> In 1967 Israel chose to go to war when Lyndon Johnson was suggesting yet another formula for "buying time," when de Gaulle was denouncing the Israelis as aggressors, when the British were on the borderline between neutral and unfriendly, and when it was feared that the Russians might intervene to support their two major clients then in the Middle East, Egypt and Syria.

There is much more I could say about the piece. But Rabbi Hertzberg has challenged me to quote him directly and I shall. Commenting on the Israel of 1967, Rabbi Hertzberg wrote: "The Jewish state could not regard itself as validly in existence until it had, at least once, perceived itself to be defying the world."

Here is the citation you asked for, Arthur Hertzberg, so you are no longer able to deny the words you were once not reluctant to set forth in print. Will you now grant that you should not have expressed yourself as you did, and take back your claim that what I wrote is untrue?

Population Control

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his article, "Population Scares" [November 1987], P. T. Bauer does a superb job of debunking myths about the virtues of population control. But his article is one-sided, outdated, and fails to focus on target groups where *population assistance* can have significant economic benefits. Lord Bauer does not distinguish between population control and population assistance. In his terms, population control involves coercive tactics whereby governments are pressured to provide family-planning services and couples are pressured to have smaller families. Population assistance, on the other hand, aims to provide the capacity to respond to national, regional, and global needs in population and family planning. It also aims to promote an awareness of the social, economic, and environmental implications of national and international population problems. It is what Lord Bauer *does not* say about population assistance that produces a one-sided view.

Perhaps my point can best be illustrated from the perspective of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). Is Lord Bauer correct when he claims that UNFPA—the largest single multilateral population fund—pressures governments to adopt a particular population policy? And if his claim were true that population interventions do not help development, how could I, a development economist, rationalize serving UNFPA?

Debate over population control raged from the early 1960's to the mid-1970's. In 1974, however, the United Nations World Population Conference said "enough." Myths of population control came under heavy attack and gave way to a consensus that population programs should be an integral part of development and modernization, not a panacea for development itself. This position is fully reflected by UNFPA: when providing population assistance, UNFPA responds to needs and priorities as determined by developing countries. Indeed, the two guiding principles of UNFPA are respect for national sovereignty and strict neutrality regarding national policy perspectives. Thus, Lord Bauer is completely wrong when he associates UNFPA with population control.

Then what do organizations like UNFPA do? Their purpose is not, as he suggests, to promote population scares but to help reduce real population problems and improve the health of women and children. For example, the World Fertility Survey reveals that desired family size is lower than actual family size in many poor countries. It also revaels that modern family-planning techniques are in demand and in short supply. By helping fill the gap, UNFPA is accommodating demand.

Equally important, the World Fertility Survey shows that short birth intervals often raise the risk of infant mortality by 50-100 percent. When infant mortality is high, as in poorer countries, women become trapped on a "reproductive treadmill." More births are required to attain a desired number of surviving children. By providing education on the benefits of birth spacing, and by helping women plan their families, UNFPA has helped reduce personal reproductive costs. That is, fetal wastage is reduced, infant mortality falls, and healthier children result. Indeed, many poorer countries with no interest in population control or fertility reduction *per se* seek UNFPA assistance to reduce infant mortality and plan families more rationally.

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As a development economist, I see at least two potent benefits to population assistance. The first amounts to an investment return on human capital. When women are freed from the treadmill of infant mortality and ill-health, they become available for other activities such as job-related training. And when the destructive effects of short birth intervals are removed from families, more evenly spaced infants tend to be better nourished, healthier, and better performers in school. As these infants grow, their improved health, stature, and reduced sickness—all human capital variables—contribute to improved earnings, particularly in poor countries where labor-intensive farming is so prevalent.

The second benefit is income distribution. Lord Bauer claims that a positive, causal relationship between population programs and per-capita income cannot be demonstrated. True enough, but higher per-capita income is only half of development goals. The other half is to reduce relative deprivation and income inequality. In its more balanced view of population assistance, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences concludes that population assistance can improve income inequality when directed at the poorest segments of the population.

The plight of rural landless workers, estimated at about one billion in poor countries, illustrates this point. Surveys show that infant mortality among landless families is almost three times that of landowning families. To compensate for this mortality, the fertility behavior of landless women is 50 percent higher than among women in landowning families—evidence again of the "reproductive treadmill." How do we solve this problem? One answer, of course, is to urge land reform, more economic assistance, etc. But as experience shows, progress in these areas comes in dribbles. Economic reforms need to be complemented with knowledge and services to promote birth spacing, reduced mortality, reduced fertility, etc. Indeed, population assistance to these groups goes far beyond family planning. It includes strategies to assist migration for employment and resettlement as well as integrating population concerns in development planning and demonstrating how development policies can unintentionally subtract from population welfare.

Though Lord Bauer does not deny the legitimacy of family planning in poorer countries, he argues that a change in couples' attitudes about desired family size is a necessary prerequisite. To influence such attitudes, he recommends extending external commercial contacts to ordinary people in the Third World, especially trade, media, and educational contacts with the West. Following John Caldwell, he claims that attitudes to fertility reduction depend less on income, status, and urbanization than on modernization—that is, Westernization. But he fails to mention that current population assistance is a messenger of modernization. An organization like UNFPA helps women recognize that traditional routes to planning families are but one of many modern choices available. Population assistance also provides information and services on modern methods of family planning, new techniques of reducing subfecundity, efficient contraceptive techniques, the dangers of abortion, and the importance of human resource development.

It may be provocative to launch an attack solely on sensationalistic evils and the naiveté of population control. But when one takes a particular side, the pendulum can swing too far. The cost to non-experts is that they are deprived of understanding real progress in population activities—a more balanced perspective that UNFPA and other international agencies have been working toward.

R. Paul Shaw
United Nations Fund for
Population Activities
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

P.T. Bauer's article contains a remarkable number of fallacies and errors. Only a few can be mentioned here.

Lord Bauer states that income per capita is not an indicator of the quality of life. It is admittedly only a rough indicator, but this does not mean it is no indicator at all. A difference of 20 or 30 percent may be compensated by other factors; it does not follow, however, that a difference of 1,000 percent can be compensated.

He tries to cast doubt on current population statistics by alleging that "estimates of the population of the People's Republic of China differ by many millions." This was the case prior to the 1982 census, but since then there has been no dispute among demographers on this point.

He brings up the old fallacy that a certain population density is needed before transportation facilities become economic. The transportation networks in extremely thinly populated countries like Canada, Norway, and Sweden seem to be eminently satisfactory.

The existence of small, densely-populated, prosperous countries like the Venetian republic in medieval times, and Holland, Belgium, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore today does not show that natural resources are unnecessary for the creation of wealth. All these countries maintain their prosperity by importing raw materials and exporting manufactures. It is obvious that all, or even most, countries cannot do this simultaneously.

A necessary concomitant of industrialization is the reduction of the agricultural labor force to 10 percent (or less) of the total labor force. The labor force of the Third World is approximately one billion, of which 60 percent is in agriculture. With zero population growth, reducing the Third World's agricultural labor force to 100 million means creating 500 million jobs in manufacturing and services. If the labor force doubles, reaching the target of 10 percent in agriculture would mean creating 1.4 billion jobs; Lord Bauer would have us believe that this is no more difficult than creating 500 million jobs.

Bernard Gilland
Espergaerde, Denmark

P. T. Bauer writes:

The advocacy of officially-sponsored birth-control programs is like the hydra: no sooner is one argument met than two others take its place. The arguments are also often garnished with extraneous matters, as in R. Paul Shaw's references to migration, resettlement, and development planning. And when all else fails, the advocates can always bring in externalities.

Mr. Shaw writes that "UNFPA responds to needs and priorities as determined by developing countries. Indeed, the two guiding principles of UNFPA are respect for national sovereignty and strict neutrality regarding national policy perspectives." This passage epitomizes the disagreement between advocates and critics of official birth-control programs. *Countries* do not make decisions. The central issue is

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whether the number of children people have should be decided by individuals and families or by politicians and national and international civil servants. Do these latter groups have the right to press or force people in their most vital private decisions? This is the heart of the matter. The rest is fog or froth.

Mr. Shaw suggests that the 1974 UN population conference has settled the debate on population control apparently once and for all. So far as I know, that conference did not address the central issue. The debate is far from over: witness, among other publications, Julian Simon's scholarly and wide-ranging book, *The Ultimate Resource*.

The Western aid agencies, including the World Bank and UNFPA, urge Third World governments to adopt fertility-control policies. Some Western aid is earmarked for this purpose. As I wrote in my article, Robert S. McNamara, when World Bank president, applauded the Indian government's population policy. Again, I have shown in my article and elsewhere how in the Third World different forms of official population intervention, including advice, education, and persuasion, shade into mass coercion. And even in the absence of outright coercion, intense and insistent official propaganda for the abandonment of established mores and modes of conduct can disturb, even distress, many people.

According to Mr. Shaw, the various official organizations which promote fertility control do not "promote population scares but help reduce real population problems." Does he not think that McNamara's observations quoted in my article are scare-mongering with their comparison of population growth and nuclear war? And, as I have just said, the official international organizations are not passive observers but urge or even press Third World leaders to promote birth control.

Mr. Shaw asks how he as a development economist could rationalize serving UNFPA if population interventions did not help economic development. He clearly thinks his question is rhetorical. This is not the case. I do not know and cannot know why he serves UNFPA. What I do know is that there are other development economists, including scholars of standing, who take a very different view of official birth-control programs from Mr. Shaw's. Mr. Shaw clearly thinks it self-evident that competent development economists must favor official population intervention. I do not take this position.

Some of Mr. Shaw's observations about the difference between actual and desired family size suggest that children are somehow visited upon parents, or that Third World people are at the mercy of uncontrollable sexual drives. Such unwarranted condescension and contempt spuriously justify coercion. Nor does a high birth rate reflect simply the desire to replace lost children. In much of the Third World, fertility rates have remained very high long after a precipitate fall in infant and child mortality, which suggests that if people have many children this is not merely to replace those who died young.

High birth and infant-mortality rates do indeed often go together with backwardness and poverty. But this does not mean that the former cause the latter. The causal relationship is much more complex. Economic advancement and progress certainly cannot be achieved by pressing people to have fewer children.

Income differences and changes in them cannot be discussed sensibly without considering the relevant background. The merits of activities undertaken to reduce income inequality and poverty hinge critically on how the results come about. Thus, if more of the poor die or are forcibly sterilized, this reduces poverty, and it also diminishes income inequality, i.e., it brings about what is misleadingly termed "improvement in distribution." The same applies if large numbers of people are forced back into subsistence production. Yet such sequences do not reflect an improvement in the condition of the poor. Contrast such development with a reduction of income differences and of poverty brought about by a rise in the real income of unskilled workers, or voluntary reduction in family size, or the accumulation of productive capital, or technical progress.

I need not dwell on Bernard Gilland's letter at length. Per-capita income cannot serve even remotely as an index of economic welfare unless it is standardized for age composition. This should be obvious from the fact that the birth or survival of a child reduces per-capita income, while the birth or survival of a calf increases it. There are major unresolved problems of concept and measurement in the use of the national income even for national accounting. For example, the distinction between intermediate and final goods and services—that is, between income and the cost of producing it—is often arbitrary. When it comes to comparing incomes in the West with those of the Third World, the conventional estimates are often subject to margins of error of several hundred percent. But the basic point does not so much concern statistical measurement as the appropriate use of concepts. S. Herbert Frankel rightly insisted many years ago that it is fundamentally inappropriate and misleading to use an accounting concept as an index of welfare.

I do not know how far demographers are currently agreed on the size of the population of China. In my article I cited the widely divergent estimates for Nigeria, where the statistical service is more highly developed than in, say, Ethiopia or Zaire. Nor do per-capita incomes vary inversely with population density or growth, as Mr. Gilland clearly implies.

His reference to such relatively thinly populated and highly developed countries as Canada, Sweden, and Norway is irrelevant to conditions in the interior of Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

In the context of population growth and control, the last paragraph of Mr. Gilland's letter would be relevant only if total world-output income and unemployment were constrained by land and other natural resources. For reasons set out in my article, this is not so.

A comparison of the letters of Mr. Shaw and Mr. Gilland throws some light on the statistics so freely bandied about in this area. Mr. Shaw writes that there are about one billion landless workers in poor countries; according to Mr. Gilland, *the total labor force* in the Third World is about one billion, with 60 percent in agriculture, that is, 600 million, including the many millions of landowning peasants. For various reasons, including incomplete specialization, occupational statistics over much of the Third World are of little meaning.

I should like, finally, to draw attention to a notable anomaly or paradox. Exponents of the most influential and articulate opinions on the relation between the West and

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the Third World, such as official spokesmen of the Third World, of international organizations, and of aid agencies, freely insist that the West must not impose its standards, mores, and attitudes on Third World governments and people, especially the former, least of all by political pressure. But when it comes to birth control the opposite is being advocated. May this not be an example of the lack of sympathy of these groups with personal decision-making—the assumption of personal responsibility by ordinary people in the Third World—or even outright hostility to it?

Tom Wolfe

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is saddening that Kenneth S. Lynn and COMMENTARY saw fit to give Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* a review devoted chiefly to a discussion of the novel's failure to live up to its admittedly enormous ambitions and not of the book's rather considerable achievements [Books in Review, February].

To criticize a novel for failing to succeed to the mantle of Honoré de Balzac is, I think, both niggling and ungenerous. As is, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* is the first American novel in many a year that leads both readers and reviewers to invoke the name of Balzac (not to mention Thackeray and Trollope and other great social satirists) to describe what Tom Wolfe is trying to get at. In turning his back on what Mr. Lynn brilliantly calls the "solipsistic" self-absorption of so many modern American novels and instead finding his model in writers like Balzac, Wolfe has earned the passionate thanks of America's serious readers. Until now, we have been driven relentlessly back into the 19th century to find novels whose characters and situations bear some relation to our own.

Wolfe's novel, which is the first book I can remember that is being swallowed whole by an entire class of literate people, is galvanizing because it captures the way we live now in a fashion that does justice to the moral complexity and specific social circumstances of our time.

That is not to say it is as signal an accomplishment as Theodore Dreiser's indelible *An American Tragedy*, with which Mr. Lynn compares it unfavorably. Is Wolfe's Sherman McCoy as memorable a character as Dreiser's Clyde Griffiths? Certainly not; although some of his minor characters have the vivid texture of the great caricatures in Thackeray's novels. But he is quite good enough, and the sympathy Wolfe manages to evoke for his increasingly piteous circumstances is all the more remarkable given the sketchy nature of our introduction to McCoy. Somehow, Wolfe manages to turn this fantastically wealthy bond trader into an Everyman, which is at the very least a novelistic gambit worthy of discussion instead of being dismissed on the basis of whether McCoy would or would not have called the

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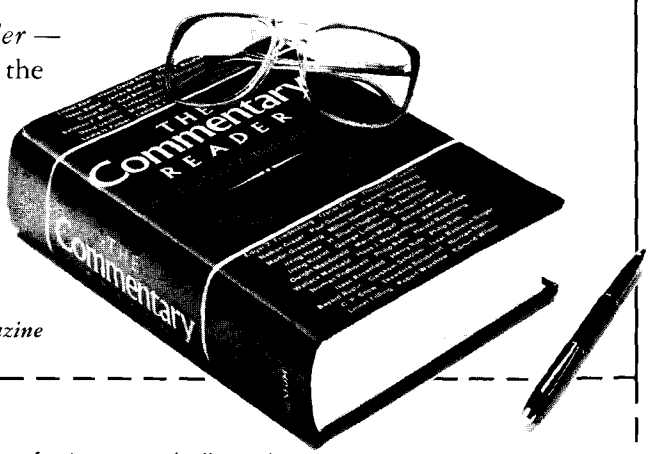

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cops at a central moment in the plot.

In Anthony Trollope's *Phineas Redux*, Phineas Finn is nearly executed for supposedly committing a murder, and the construction of the ridiculously flimsy case against him is hardly Trollope's finest performance. But that does not make all that much of a difference; the experience of sharing Phineas's cell with him is a powerful one for the reader. Mr. Lynn is insisting on a peculiar standard of novelistic accuracy that few of the great novelists could meet except in their very finest moments.

Mr. Lynn, as reviewer, has demonstrated on many occasions his brilliance on the attack. That critical faculty has been indispensable during these lean and bitter years for American literature. But his discussion of Tom Wolfe's novel raises the interesting question of whether those of us who have been wrestling with the problem of how to write about modern fiction can really know when to leave good enough alone. At the very least, Wolfe's book is a terrifically hopeful performance, the kind that might well start a trend back toward the social novel. Mr. Lynn's refusal to treat the book with the respect it really does deserve suggests an almost reflexive need to find fault.

Usually I am in sympathy with that approach, but on this occasion I find it doubly saddening. It seems to me that Mr. Lynn also seriously undervalues Tom Wolfe's political courage. In his unflinching portrayal of the political and social poisoning of relations between the races, Wolfe demonstrates a kind of novelistic courage that ought to be celebrated by those neoconservatives who have been arguing through these questions for a decade or more and have been greeted with scorn by those who do not wish to hear their inconvenient messages.

Mr. Lynn's dismissal of the novel's apocalyptic depiction of racial strife is interesting in light of the fact that many of Wolfe's novelistic inventions are coming to pass these days in New York City. Those who doubt this fact need only substitute the name of the real-life Reverend Al Sharpton for Wolfe's Reverend Bacon and the real-life "days of outrage" for Wolfe's media-inspired demonstrations in front of the Edgar Allen Poe housing projects in the South Bronx.

All in all, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* deserved better from Mr. Lynn and COMMENTARY—or if not better, then at least a treatment that comprehended the book's importance even as it challenged its foundations.

JOHN PODHORETZ
Washington, D.C.

KENNETH S. LYNN writes:

A generation ago, Edwin O'Connor's *The Last Hurrah* was saluted by most critics in much the same way that they have now greeted *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. Not only was O'Connor's novel a splendid entertainment, but it represented a truly important contribution to American literature.

Today, "the last hurrah" endures as a phrase in our political discourse, but the novel itself no longer lives in our minds. In my judgment, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* will suffer a similar fate. The brilliance of Tom Wolfe—and no "reflexive need to find fault" blocks me from employing such a laudatory word—is largely to be found in his journalism.

As for the relations between the races in this country, I find them as troubling today as I did twenty years ago when, in the same month that Martin Luther King was assassinated, I resigned a full professorship at Harvard in order to help launch a predominantly black university in Washington, D.C., called Federal City College. Yet there is an enormous discrepancy between racial tension and racial revolution, between Howard Beach and the latter-day version of Poe's "Masque of the Red Death" that Tom Wolfe urges upon us in his novel. Apocalypticism is *not* a means of doing justice to "the moral complexity and specific social circumstances of our time." Nor is it a sign of "novelistic courage." Nor is it a position with which neoconservatives have been associated, or ought to be. To the contrary, the elevation of the racial issue to such portentous heights is reductionistic and sentimental, and some of its most enthusiastic adherents, revealingly enough, are rich and fashionable Upper East Side liberals, whose guilt-stricken politics Tom Wolfe used to know were silly, before he himself became a millionaire.

Education in America

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Terry Teachout's excellent article ["Why Johnny Is Ignorant," March] helps us to understand the problem. . . . But the solution is more complex than the one Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn, Jr. suggest in their book, *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?*: reintroducing "the literary canon." This is a wonderful suggestion, but most high-school students could not handle it. At least not now.

The situation is no better at the college level. Last semester an upper junior in a class of mine wrote (in her outline) about how some Eskimo groups practice a form of voluntary euthanasia: "The old people went out of town to allow themselves to freeze to death." Out of exasperation I . . . wrote in the margin: "Did they go uptown or downtown; did they take the subway or bus?" I apologized to her for my crudity, but the level of her thinking is common. We are teaching semi-literate young adults. Not only are they not familiar with literature or history but most cannot spell properly, . . . or write a clear, simple, sentence, or use proper syntax or grammar.

It is not the students' fault. Elitist academics, fearful administrators who capitulate to know-nothings, "community-control" hustlers, politicians who always want to lower the water rather than raise the bridge, and phony "people's advocates" certainly all contribute to the current mess. . . .

What can we do? I have no magic solutions but, for a start, let us reintroduce the old requirements (four years of English and history; two to three of the sciences; two foreign languages, etc.). We would, at the least, be reintroducing expectations and demanding that students learn self-discipline . . . and responsibility. No more free lunch.

What I have done every semester for over twenty-five years . . . is to assign students to groups which collectively research various aspects of topics such as drugs, death, alcohol, divorce, or aging. Then I teach them to use the library, requiring them to go to several research libraries in Manhattan and report to me about what they have researched. I teach them how to write a thorough outline with proper citations and references . . . and then I have them prepare both an oral and written report on their assigned topic. The group panels are supervised by student tutors who took the course previously and are therefore a wonderful source of as-

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sistance and support to their panelists. . . .

I correct all outlines for ideas, spelling, grammar, syntax. I tease, I cajole, I plead, I praise, and I always say: if you really want to survive, you must learn to think (i.e., to read), and if you want to be a human being you must acquire knowledge. I also say: TV *could* be a blessing but right now it's a curse, it's a drug, it's addicting, and it's making you stupid. . . .

Nothing miraculous occurs. . . . Some drop out, . . . but most improve their basic writing skills. Some are amazed at what they can learn in libraries and ashamed, especially in their senior year, that they had not known how to use them earlier. The tutors become sharper and better researchers, and some students and tutors actually develop a love for learning.

Perhaps every teacher could do a bit of this, using his own style, skills, and teaching tricks. . . . If we all do a little, we might even be able to raise the bridge a bit and every little bit helps. We cannot hope to emulate the East Los Angeles high-school teacher, Jaime Escalante, whose story is told in the movie *Stand and Deliver*, but we know from his example what good teaching can accomplish.

SHELDON SELLER

Queens College
Flushing, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Terry Teachout's article is one of a number of recently published pieces . . . which assume, first, that there is no alternative to the canon of major works by renowned British and American writers except books that are unworthy of the curriculum in literary quality and themes, and, second, that the *reason* "Johnny is ignorant" is because the schools emphasize "skills" (reading, presumably) over content. I believe the facts and diagnosis offered are faulty. The choice is not between classics and chaos, as Mr. Teachout well knows. There are many books of excellent . . . literary quality that are outside the canon which would have more content appeal to teen-age students, and should be used *in addition to* works of the canon.

An important goal of schooling prior to college is to teach Johnny to read and think, which requires that the books he reads have a proper balance of theme-interest and stylistic readability, as well as literary quality. The three do not always go together, and insisting that Johnny press on through Lawrence Sterne and Thomas Hardy even if it takes months to finish one book, in which he has no interest, is to lose sight of ends and become a slave to partially obsolete means.

The reason Johnny is ignorant is to a large extent because he cannot read, and insisting that he read the canon and nothing else before the reading problem is solved puts the cart before the horse—it perpetuates or even worsens the reading problem and does nothing to solve the ignorance problem. I can, indeed, imagine accomplishing more by starting out certain students with Pearl Buck rather than Virginia Woolf. That choice should not be treated as political or aesthetic but *strategic*: will it help Johnny to read and think better and encourage him by his success to undertake more complex reading? Perhaps if more such choices were available to students, particularly in the first two years of high school, Johnny would read better *and* be less ignorant. The two should not be treated as unrelated goals.

The idea of a "permanent core of 76 authors," or any other fixed canon, is a guarantee that no new books will ever have their chance to join the canon and perhaps even replace works that have lost their ability to stimulate or interest students. If a fixed-canon approach had been used in the past, the canon of literature, art, and music as we know it would never have developed in the first place.

LIPPMAN BODOFF

Glen Rock, New Jersey

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

I do not advocate a fixed, immutable canon, literary or otherwise. Neither do Diane Ravitch and Chester Finn, and neither does any other intelligent person. Moreover, I can certainly imagine "accomplishing more by starting out certain students with Pearl Buck rather than Virginia Woolf."

Unfortunately, the enemies of the canon have something far more insidious in mind. They wish to teach all students that Virginia Woolf is *no better* than Pearl Buck. They are not merely attacking the canon itself, but the underlying principle of a canon: the fact (for it is a fact) that some books are better than others and, *mutatis mutandis*, that some values are better than others. Therein lies the threat they pose to the teaching of the humanities and, in the long run, to the survival of Western civilization itself.

Psychoanalysis

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to comment on Wilfred M. McClay's review of Peter Gay's *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis* [Books in Review, March]. Mr. McClay's debunking of Gay's deification of Freud will be appreciated not only by anti-Freudians, but also by analytic therapists like myself who are constantly and repeatedly confronted with clinical evidence of the limited and tentative nature of our knowledge and skills.

One wonders, however, at Mr. McClay's assertion that psychoanalysis is but one of many valuable models that have sometimes proved useful in providing access to "the tangled reality of the human soul." Perhaps Mr. McClay would like to tell us what other body of psychological theory and observation has seriously confronted the contradictory complexities of the human soul.

Also, as someone whose professional interest in psychoanalysis is primarily clinical, I would like to suggest that Mr. McClay is poorly informed about the manner in which hypotheses are formulated and tested in actual clinical practice. His categorical assertion that psychoanalysis is not a real science because its hypotheses are not falsifiable and are not publicly tested must be surprising indeed to clinicians who have spent endless hours in supervision and case conferences learning how to formulate testable hypotheses. Mr. McClay would gain a good deal of needed perspective by consulting Robert Langs's *The Technique of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, especially the sections on interventions and confirmations of interventions.

RICHARD SHUR

Ann Arbor, Michigan

WILFRED M. MCCLAY writes:

I *think* that Richard Shur and I are playing on the same side of the net, judging from his admission of "the limited and tentative nature of our knowledge and skills." But there are several points that need to be made in response to his re-

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marks. First, I would remind him that my review had a limited mission, and that if he wants to reassert large and exclusive claims for psychoanalysis, he should address himself to the powerful critics I mentioned in my essay.

Second, I am amazed to find him implying that only those adopting an explicitly psychoanalytic perspective have come to terms with "the contradictory complexities of the human soul." Did Augustine lack such an appreciation? Or Paul? Or Pascal? Or Kierkegaard? Or Melville? Or Dostoevsky? Or any number of other philosophers, theologians, and writers?

Third, I find it curious that despite his clinical interests Mr. Shur makes no mention of psychoanalysis's miserable record of therapeutic inefficacy. Had he done so, he would have had to admit that there are plenty of other approaches to psychotherapy that work as well as, or better than, psychoanalysis; and that many of the most effective psychotherapists are unabashedly eclectic in their methods. When a wide variety of distinct paths can be used to reach the same destination, how can any one path claim a lock on the truth?

Dance Criticism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There is a variety of methods by which a writer's decline can be shown, and we expect to see at least one of them in action when we are told that an important writer has not lived up to the expectations engendered by his previous work. Yet Jacqueline Coleman, in her review of Arlene Croce's *Sight Lines* [Books in Review, February], concludes that Arlene Croce is a "once brilliant dance critic who has lost her nerve—and a fair measure of her pertinence" without availing herself of a single one of these methods. Miss Coleman simply (1) characterizes Arlene Croce's work in a manner so deformed as to falsify it altogether; and (2) tells us that Miss Croce holds incorrect opinions. This mode of discourse tells us nothing about Arlene Croce and serves little else except to make Jacqueline Coleman look like a gnat chewing at the heel of a giant.

Miss Coleman tells us we have suffered a loss—the authoritative voice of the writer "generally thought to be our most eminent dance critic." Such a loss, had it in fact occurred, would be a source of some anguish, or so you might think, for anyone who cares about the art of writing in general and dance writing in particular. Yet Miss Coleman evokes no sense of regret in her piece, which might be due to the fact that she has little feeling for her own vocation. Or it could be that even Jacqueline Coleman herself does not believe Arlene Croce's voice has lost its power to excite and illuminate? It isn't clear why Miss Coleman wrote her piece or what she is trying to say.

DAVID DANIEL
New York City

JACQUELINE COLEMAN writes:

Many dance lovers view Arlene Croce's dance criticism as superlative and even oracular. Thus when the jacket of her latest book, *Sight Lines*, proclaimed it "an informal history of dance in America during these years [1982-1987]," as well as "a brilliantly incisive account of the state of the art today," there was some reason to expect precisely that. In my opinion, though, *Sight Lines* did not turn out to be such a record. An accurate history of American dance in the 80's would have to acknowledge the unfortunate results of the trends I listed in my article—the shift from pure dance to more narrative works; the embellishment of spare postmodernism with huge, arty sets; the attempted merger of postmodern and modern dance with ballet; the amorphousness of regional ballet companies; the retirement of great dancers and the lack of artistry among young ones; the dearth of important new choreographers; and the loss of the New York City Ballet as a revolutionary company. Further, a useful volume about this era would have to explore the full impact of these trends, which I also mentioned: no less than the closing of America's golden age of dance. In *Sight Lines*, though, Arlene Croce misses, finesses, or glances over these enormous developments, which I consider to be a major critical failure and grounds for a diminution of her reputation.

Balzac

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The citation of Balzac in Carter Cooper's review of *The Fords* by Peter Collier and David Horowitz [Books in Review, March] seems to be incorrect. The phrase Mr. Cooper cites—"Behind every great fortune there is a great crime"—has also appeared at least twice in the New York *Times* in the last few years, and not long ago in *Time*. These words put Balzac in the camp of the Marxists (unfairly, in my opinion).

This presumably derives from a passage in *Père Goriot*, spoken by Vautrin, which reads: "*Le secret des grandes fortunes sans cause apparente est un crime oublié, parce qu'il a été proprement fait*" ("The secret of great fortunes with no apparent cause is a forgotten crime, forgotten because it was properly carried out"); translated by M.A. Crawford, Penguin Books, 1951.

PHILIP LYMAN
Gotham Book Mart
New York City

CARTER COOOPER writes:

Balzac, as Philip Lyman points out, was no Marxist but a keen-eyed observer of the darker side of human nature, and *Père Goriot*, a novel peopled by brilliant as well as inept schemers, plotters, and manipulators, hardly propounds an overturning of the social order. It is not clear to me, however, that the version that I used of Balzac's famous epigram makes him out to be any more of a Marxist than the more faithful translation put in evidence by Mr. Lyman. In any case, I thank him for his scrupulous attention.

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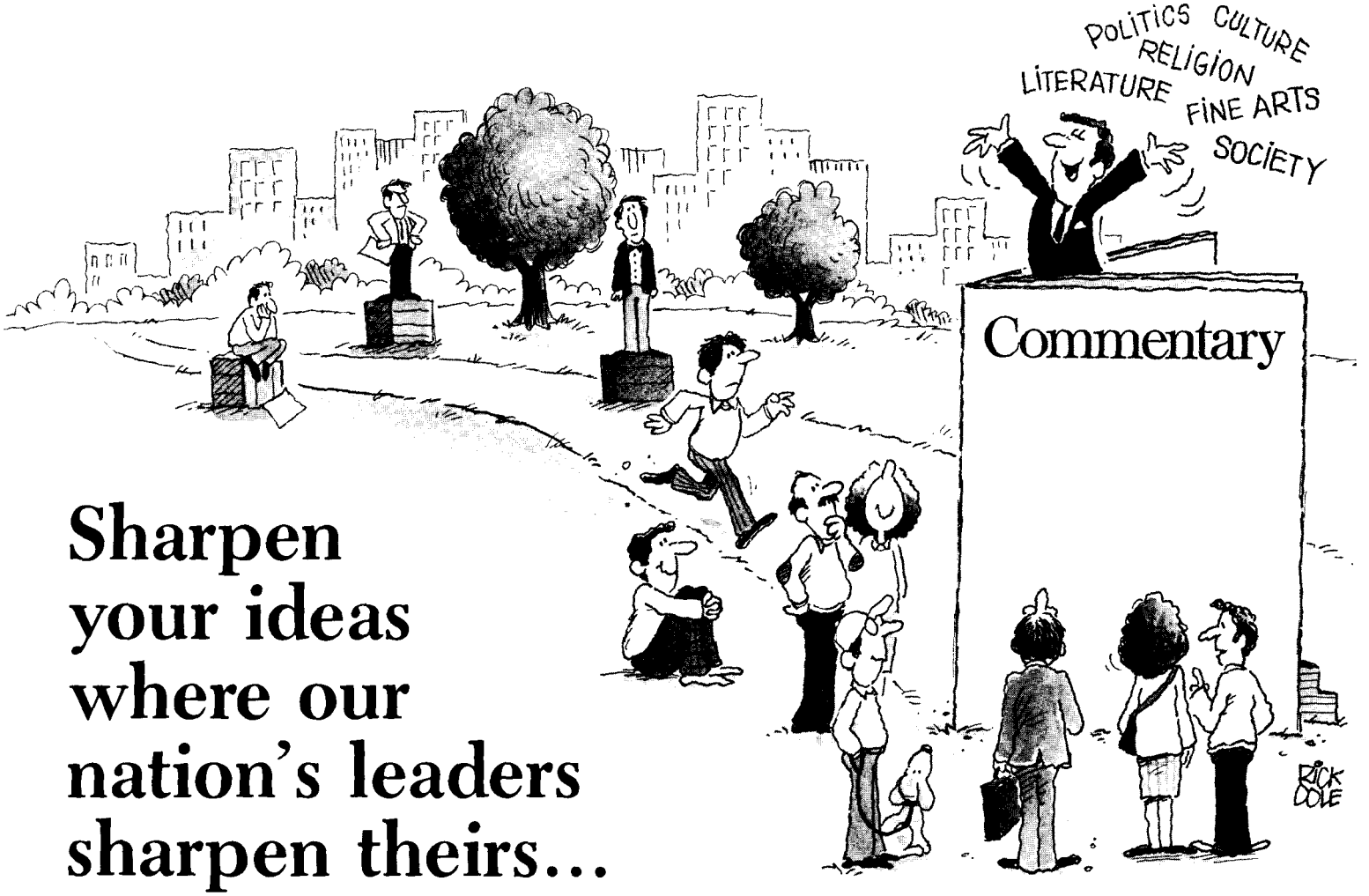

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Making Central America Safe for Communism

Mark Falcoff

THE decision of the U.S. Congress on February 3, 1988 to suspend military aid to the Nicaraguan resistance closes an entire episode in the history of American foreign policy. Without doubt, it effectively buries what some have called the Reagan Doctrine, and suggests that, whatever lasting changes may have been wrought by Reaganism in the domestic-policy environment these last eight years, the left wing of the Democratic party has finally succeeded in imposing—once and for all—its own foreign-policy agenda on Central America, with potentially broad implications for other areas of the Third World.

A different reading of these events might lead, of course, to a more optimistic conclusion. The congressional vote was followed almost immediately by a cease-fire and negotiations between the two parties to the Nicaraguan civil war, something to which the Sandinistas had long insisted they would never agree. This would seem to be a triumph for multilateral diplomacy, since the impending settlement was designed by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, on the basis of consultation with the leaders of four other Central American nations.

The Arias plan essentially seeks to end a regional civil war; to resolve peacefully political conflicts within individual Central American countries; and to end the intervention of the superpowers in the isthmus. It very specifically calls for national reconciliation, amnesty for rebels, and the establishment of democratic institutions. This is a tall order for one diplomatic instrument, sponsored by the chief of state of a country without an army, and therefore—as Arias himself has acknowledged—wholly dependent upon "world opinion."

History is littered with diplomatic documents which purport to reconcile conflict among nations, or among peoples who would become nations. But the Arias plan pretends to do something even more: to rearrange the political order *within* countries. For that reason alone, it invites skepticism. For if settlements between contending parties are to take hold, they must be enforced—not merely by control commissions or border forces but by a broader consensus on the desired outcome. This is precisely what is lacking in Nicaragua, and indeed in Central America as a whole. Instead, we have a diplomatic plan underpinned only by a convergence of a single momentary need —to end U.S. support for the Nicaraguan resistance. Beyond that, the partners in this peculiar coalition fall apart. And so do the realities which the Arias plan purports to shape.

I.

LET us begin with the U.S. Congress. It is true, as conservatives never tire of pointing out, that some members of that body are ardent supporters of the Sandinista dictatorship in Managua. But they are few in number; they make no effort to disguise their views; their names are well known to the public. Alone they could never have accomplished their task—to facilitate the consolidation of the second Communist government in the Western hemisphere, and to open the way for the advent of a third. Indeed, Speaker Jim Wright, one of the principal architects of the congressional understanding with President Arias, is on most issues slightly to the Right of Center, at least within his own party. And many of his colleagues who joined with him to terminate further military assistance to the so-called *"contras"** have often supported the Reagan administration on military aid to El Salvador in the past, at times —as in the case of Speaker Wright—making a crucial difference.

This suggests that other dynamics are at work, which have little or nothing to do with Central

MARK FALCOFF was a senior consultant to the Kissinger Commission on Central America and a professional staff member with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in the 99th Congress.

* This term, drawn from the word "counterrevolutionary," is accurate only if one believes that the Sandinistas have the exclusive right to be called revolutionaries in Nicaragua. It suggests, among other things, that the resistance fighters are trying to restore an old order—somewhat similar to the Somoza regime. This is surely not possible, even were the resistance fighters to wish it. But more to the point, it links forces (as opposed to individual personalities) with the Somoza dictatorship which either had no political existence in that era, or were actually opposed to the status quo.

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America. The most obvious of these is partisan politics, and in truth the Nicaraguan issue has been a marvelous stick with which to beat the Reagan administration. Repeated polls have shown over several years now that most Americans oppose military aid to the Nicaraguan resistance by majorities running between two and three to one. (They also oppose economic and military aid to El Salvador, and indeed almost every other country, by equally impressive figures.) By presenting Reagan's policies exclusively in terms of means—that is, weapons and ammunition—as opposed to ends, the Democrats have been able to confuse the public as to the real issues at stake, to exploit strong undercurrents of isolationism, and to seize and hold what passes for the moral high ground.

Moreover, there are active constituencies working for the Sandinistas in almost every congressional district in the country—often operating out of churches or church-related organizations—and they have not been slow to make their influence felt in Washington and in the state capitals, where many legislatures have moved to forbid the participation of U.S. National Guard units in Honduras or anywhere else in Central America.

By way of contrast, there has been no grassroots movement on behalf of the resistance, and hardly any public support of any kind for it. It would be surprising if there were. Americans have no stomach for other people's civil wars; most still know little or nothing about Nicaragua (or any other country); and what they have been told by the media—particularly the electronic media—is that the resistance is nothing but a bunch of cutthroats, drug dealers, and holdovers from the Somoza regime. Hence, to support it carries a very high price with key Democratic constituencies, as more than one member of Congress has discovered. For example, Representative Les Aspin (D.-Wis.) almost lost his chairmanship of the House Armed Services Committee over one vote, and it is rumored that partly for the same reason Senator Bill Bradley (D.-N.J.) chose not to enter the 1988 presidential race. Even the Democrats' putative "centrist" candidate, Senator Albert Gore, Jr., has consistently voted against military aid.

But the Democrats' approach to Nicaragua also bespeaks a particular cast of mind—a temperament, if you will, clearly shaped by the Vietnam experience and by what some read as the realities of U.S. politics. The operative assumptions are as follows. Foreigners do a better job than we do of defining U.S. security interests, at least when Republicans control the White House. All revolutions are caused by poverty, disease, and hunger. Political forces in other countries which openly espouse Marxism-Leninism will not necessarily impose their ideology if they come to power. Totalitarian governments over time mellow and become tractable and less threatening to their own people and the United States, whereas authoritarian governments do not. Third World governments which ally themselves to the Soviet Union do so because of our policies, which alienate them needlessly. Nonintervention is always the best policy when dealing with hostile Third World states, regardless of the costs and consequences. Conversely, intervention leads to "another Vietnam." Finally, the victory of "our side" in Third World conflicts (whether in Angola or Nicaragua) is bound to be the worst possible outcome, in moral if not in strategic terms.*

These are positions which are easier to take in opposition than when one is charged with full responsibility for the conduct of foreign policy. Thus they are ready-made for congressional posturing, and also for the political culture of a party which has lost four of the last five presidential elections, bids fair to lose yet another, but continues to be strong at the local level. On the other hand, public opinion in the United States can change rapidly—as the Carter administration learned to its dismay in 1979-80—and throughout 1987 many Democrats were fearful of an up-or-down vote on aid to the resistance, just in case the chickens should come home to roost.

To avoid this eventuality, the Democrats in Congress have long been searching for a *deus ex machina*. Between 1983 and 1986 it was the Contadora initiative, an omnibus peace proposal sponsored jointly by Mexico, Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela. Contadora was an undifferentiated laundry list of 21 points, from nonintervention on the one hand to the implementation of democratic practices on the other (as if the two were not contradictory). It held out no possibilities of enforcement, particularly when the sponsoring states were so politically diverse (two of them by no stretch of the imagination democracies in their own right). Above all, the Central American states most immediately concerned with the outcome of the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran civil wars were reluctant to allow their future to be brokered by the Contadora Four, especially Mexico, which, contrary to what many American liberals have claimed, is heartily distrusted in the isthmus.†

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* The only exception has been support for the Afghan guerrillas, partly no doubt because it is not possible to deny the nature of Soviet involvement in that country, and partly, too, because no one thinks that if the rebels had failed, the United States would have been inclined to send its own men in after them.

† One of the more dishonest (or perhaps ignorant) assertions of critics of the Reagan administration during the early 1980's was that Mexico somehow knew the region better than we, and had the right to replace the United States as the major external player there. Mexico's interventionist pretensions are strongly resented in Guatemala, and its efforts along with France to recognize the Salvadoran guerrillas as a "representative political force" in 1982 drew a vehement response not only in Central America but throughout the Latin American continent.

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The particular charm of the Arias plan was that it was a *Central American* document, proposed by the president of the oldest and firmest democracy in the region. Moreover, after much arm-twisting, threats, and blandishments, it was accepted even by the Sandinistas, who could not possibly have liked its provisions for democracy and national reconciliation but who were finally persuaded by their friends in the United States that this was the only way to defeat the Reagan administration. By the time the White House was ready to ask for a vote on new aid to the resistance, Arias had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and the congressional Democrats had a ready-made alternative in place. A grand alliance among them, the Sandinistas, the president of Costa Rica, and the Nobel academy was simply too sophisticated a formula to fail. Beyond that, the decision of the resistance leadership to sit down with the Sandinistas seemed to ratify Arias's vision; if it was good enough for the likes of Adolfo Calero, how could it be bad, even for Ronald Reagan?

Then, in one of the more cynical ploys in the history of congressional politics and foreign policy, 67 members of the House—including such key figures as Representatives Thomas Foley, Tony Coelho, David Bonior, and Dave McCurdy—sent President Reagan a letter urging him to "initiate negotiations with the Soviet Union and the government of Nicaragua leading to the exodus of military personnel, facilities, and materiel from Nicaragua." Why General Secretary Gorbachev would feel particularly pressed to do this when the United States Congress had just voted that anything—including the presence of Soviet and Eastern-bloc advisers and weaponry in Nicaragua—was more acceptable than pressures to overthrow the government which had invited them in, is one of the major mysteries of the age.*

But the responsibility for the national security of the United States still remains with the White House; apparently Congress has now covered its flank. We now know that it does not favor Soviet expansion in Central America (it has told us!), and if—thanks to President Arias—this nonetheless occurs, failure will be multilateralized, and blame dispersed. This is a new variation on the "decent interval" strategy supposedly practiced in Vietnam, with the very important difference—soon to become apparent—that Central America is two hours' flying time to the United States.

2.

THOUGH the Arias plan has provisions which apply to El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, everyone knows that its real test will be in Nicaragua. There, the fundamental issue is how far the Sandinista regime will go toward permitting pluralism and a semblance of democratic institutions. This outcome and the country's international alignment are closely related; nobody who knows Nicaragua (or for that matter, any other Latin American country) thinks that its people, even if only narrowly represented through a congress, press, and legal system, would favor joining the Soviet bloc. Thus, from the very beginning of the Sandinista decade, pluralism and nonalignment were seen by the United States under both the Carter and Reagan administrations as more or less mutually reinforcing.

In the worst of cases, this would allow Nicaragua to become "another Mexico"—a shorthand term for a country with a quasi-hegemonic party which permits significant space for opposition publications and movements to operate (though not to challenge its ultimate hold on power), as well as a vigorous private sector. The idea appeals not unnaturally to the Mexican government, but also to other Latin American states and to many U.S. critics of the Reagan administration as well. These include people who periodically (and rightly) express concern over the lack of democratic perfection in El Salvador, but who, when the subject suddenly turns to Nicaragua, lecture us on the burden of history and the lack of a civic tradition such as our own.

The trouble is, the Mexican model appeals to everyone except the Nicaraguans—be they the Sandinistas, the civic opposition, or the armed resistance. The Sandinistas have never been anything but Marxist-Leninists, and cannot imagine any form of "nonalignment" other than that practiced by countries like Cuba, Angola, or the German Democratic Republic. They combine the authoritarianism of traditional Nicaraguan political culture with the ideological certitudes of a victorious revolutionary movement. They suffer from an acute penchant for martyrdom, and in fact derive much of their international importance from baiting the United States. Since they alone cannot threaten us, they must seek an alliance with those who can. To do "business as usual" with Washington as a post-revolutionary regime would undermine their hold on parties, churches, and individuals in Western Europe, Latin America, and (why not say it?) the United States itself—sources from which they have received very considerable amounts of financial and political assistance. It would also force them to justify to their own people the maintenance of an army bigger than all of the other Central American countries combined, and a system of regimentation far more extreme than any ever experienced during more than thirty years of rule by the Somoza dynasty.

But the most important reason the Sandinistas cannot change their stripes is that they have so misgoverned Nicaragua these past nine years that they cannot afford to be challenged even at the margins. This explains why they closed the opposition newspaper *La Prensa* (as well as Radio Ca-

* See Joshua Muravchik, "How Not to Drive a Hard Bargain on Nicaragua," *Wall Street Journal*, March 23, 1988.

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tólica) in 1986, and long refused to reopen it even when members of Congress assured them that doing so was the only way to defeat President Reagan's 1986 aid request. Now that Arias has succeeded where others have failed, one has the right to ask whether a new and sobering pragmatism has finally taken hold in Managua.

There is precious little evidence that it has. True, some political prisoners have been released. However, according to Nicaragua's Permanent Commission on Human Rights, of the 985 put at liberty last August, 50 were members of the Sandinista military and 200 were prisoners whose sentences were already completed or nearly so. Some 8,000 prisoners remain in confinement. President Ortega has offered to release 3,000 more, provided that they leave the country if a cease-fire is not in effect. As several of the Nicaraguan bishops have pointedly observed, forced exile should not be confused with an amnesty. Meanwhile, the lifting of the emergency decree imposed in March 1982 does not affect such matters as arbitrary arrest and persecution of political defendants, press censorship, or the right to strike.

On March 3—that is, one month to the day after the cutoff of U.S. aid to the resistance—President Ortega announced that the Ministry of Justice would be closed and its functions assumed by the Ministry of Interior. This is the internal-security arm of the government, run by Tomás Borge, generally regarded as the most sinister of the nine-man ruling council. In effect, the last vestiges of judicial independence have been eliminated, and the functions of investigation and punishment collapsed into one.

How this will affect the civic opposition is already apparent in the coarsened texture of Nicaraguan public life. What censorship, exile, and imprisonment have not accomplished these past nine years has been turned over to the so-called *turbas*—that is, mobs, used brutally to break up opposition gatherings and intimidate anyone who dares to exercise his civic rights. Two particular targets of the *turbas* have been the January 22 Movement of Mothers of Political Prisoners and the Permanent Commission on Human Rights. But they have also been employed recently to break up opposition demonstrations, including one called by liberal and Communist trade unions protesting wage controls, the military draft, and the closing of factories due to Nicaragua's increasingly tentative electrical system.* On March 6, about 100 women marching peacefully to protest the draft were met by 150 club-swinging members of a *turba*—an incident described by the Washington *Post* (March 8, 1988) as "the most aggressive use of Sandinista mob violence against the opposition in years."

Since then a document has come to light enumerating a list of Sandinista objectives for 1988—including the use of "revolutionary terror." It warns that the prisoner releases in compliance with the Arias plan have created "an explosive potential that is highly dangerous for revolutionary power," and recommends a policy of firmness, with the army remaining in control of the Sandinista party. "What we cannot permit," it continues, "is that the true structures of power pass into the hands of the bourgeoisie." To this end it calls for "all available measures to divide and splinter" the opposition. "At these moments, we cannot renounce the use of revolutionary terror."

Though the Nicaraguan government immediately disavowed its authenticity, this document, far from being a "crude falsification," closely resembles in spirit and letter what many Sandinista leaders have said publicly and privately since at least 1979, and is wholly consistent with their actual conduct since then. Indeed, one Sandinista official who reviewed the document told Stephen Kinzer of the New York *Times* (April 7, 1988) that it looked real enough to him.

At the same time, the interstices of press freedom, which widened to permit the U.S. Congress to vote down aid to the resistance, are closing once again. After fourteen months of silence, *La Prensa* reopened in September 1987. But by the following April it suddenly and mysteriously ran out of newsprint, which is obtainable in Nicaragua only from the government. The latter's excuse was that a Soviet ship bringing paper shipments was delayed in arrival at the Pacific port of Corinto, but this did not prevent the two pro-government dailies, *Barricada* and *El Nuevo Diario*, from appearing on schedule. Meanwhile, in February and March, meetings of striking workers were broken up by *turbas*; according to the New York *Times* (April 14, 1988), one confrontation left two labor organizers dead. Collective bargaining is no longer legal in the newest socialist utopia.

In a climate of this sort, one might well ask why the resistance leaders have nonetheless taken the Sandinistas at their word and chosen to sit down at the conference table with them. The answer is that, having been abandoned by their U.S. allies, they had no choice but to surrender and hope for the best. Those opponents of the regime, old and new, who have never taken up arms against it are less optimistic. A state prosecutor and UN human-rights delegate from Nicaragua, both of whom defected on March 2, accused the Sandinistas of torture, keeping political prisoners, and rigging the judiciary. One even suggested that Nicaragua was at present undergoing a "Stalinist social drama."

It would be helpful if the Sandinistas would stop acting this way and settle down to becoming the backsliding revolutionary pragmatists that

* As in Nasser's Egypt, the Soviets have chosen to sacrifice their local affiliate—the Nicaraguan Socialist party—for an alliance with a more successful revolutionary leadership.

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American liberals, congressional Democrats, and President Arias need them to be. It would certainly be therapeutic for the long-suffering Nicaraguan people. But having eliminated the resistance as a military factor, the Arias plan ensures that if the Sandinistas choose to continue on their present course, nothing can be done about it.

3.

EVEN before the congressional vote in February, it was obvious that once Nicaragua was consigned to its fate, El Salvador would again become a bone of contention in the United States. For one thing, though the Salvadoran armed forces have made important progress in many areas since 1981, they have not liquidated the FDR-FMLN guerrilla movement; for another, though the insurgents are no longer able to mount the kind of offensives that threatened the very existence of the government six years ago, they have reverted to kidnappings, assassinations, and the destruction of productive facilities with considerable celerity and verve. In 1986 alone they inflicted a billion dollars' worth of damage on the infrastructure; the same year, U.S. aid to the government of El Salvador amounted to about $536 million, mostly for balance-of-payments assistance. Thus, while the government of President José Napoleon Duarte continued to gain ground militarily, it was running fast not even to stand still, but to keep its rate of economic decline from reaching catastrophic dimensions.

The political price fell due on March 20, 1988 when the right-wing Arena party won the largest number of seats in the National Assembly, suggesting that if present trends continue, the next President in 1989 might not be a Christian Democrat like Duarte, but someone drawn from the Right. The party's best-known personality is Roberto D'Aubuisson, a retired army major frequently and authoritatively accused of involvement with the infamous death squads. He is not, however, the party's only leader or its most representative member, which suggests that Arena expresses something worthy of serious attention.

This is difficult for many Americans to imagine, since their knowledge of El Salvador, as of most Latin American countries, remains at folkloric levels. Even now, after seven years of extensive reporting on Salvadoran politics in the American media, one can still hear references at public forums in Washington and elsewhere to that country's "oligarchy" or "sixty families," as if an entire society could consist only of a handful of haves and an ocean of have-nots. Yet El Salvador possesses a large middle stratum—poor by American standards, but not by its own—which has some stake in the security of property. In no other way could a figure as unappetizing as D'Aubuisson win 44 percent of the vote—as he did in the 1983 presidential election.*

In some ways the Arena party's advance is in line with the general trend of redemocratization in Latin America—which means not merely that democrats win elections, but that they are challenged effectively by an opposition in subsequent races. Everywhere in the region dissatisfaction with the economic situation has tended to favor the "outs"—even in Argentina, where the Peronists are now poised to recapture the presidency in 1989. El Salvador, of course, is not merely suffering from inflation or unemployment, but is at war; somebody must bear the responsibility for the costs. In addition, the Christian Democrats have imposed land and tax reforms which—whatever their intrinsic moral and political worth—have generated something of a backlash. If El Salvador is to grow as a democracy, it must have the right to sort out its economic and social priorities by deliberation and consensus. Unfortunately, as things stand now, an Arena victory may deprive it of that chance.

The reason is simple. While the political spectrum in El Salvador ranges from violent Left to violent Right, most people are clustered about the immediate suburbs of the Center. But in the U.S. Congress the acceptable alternatives for that country are limited from center Left to far Left. If Arena wins the next election and overturns Duarte's reforms, it risks losing U.S. military and economic assistance; if the party is artless enough to advance D'Aubuisson as its presidential candidate, loss of American assistance is a virtual certainty.

As with the Left, the Right in El Salvador is divided into political and "anti-political" (or peaceful and violent) communities. It would seem to be in the interests of the United States to see the most civilized elements on both sides prevail within their respective camps. The truth is, however, that even if someone far more respectable than D'Aubuisson—say, Alfredo Cristiani, a prominent businessman and civic leader—should win the presidency on the Arena ticket, he will labor under extraordinary burdens. Yet if it is punished for winning honest elections, Arena will conclude that its efforts to become a serious political force were not worth the candle. And those elements of the Right that believe in participation will lose the upper hand to those preaching and practicing violence.

Even if the Christian Democrats remain in power, El Salvador's problems with the United States will be far from over. In an environment of growing budgetary stringency in Washington, El Salvador's huge share of the American foreign-aid budget is bound to be examined critically. Para-

* He might have won even more had the United States (or rather, the Central Intelligence Agency) not covertly invested $1 million in Duarte's campaign, a fact somewhat inopportunely revealed by Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) shortly afterward.

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doxically, the very policies of populist redistribution by which the Christian Democrats earn respectability in Congress tend to undermine their economic performance at home. At present, U.S. aid policies in El Salvador are mortgaged to politico-military imperatives. As long as the war continues, they cannot be changed, even if they do not work. But given the destruction purposely inflicted by the guerrillas, it is hard to see how there will ever be enough U.S. aid to make a crucial difference.

Consequently, a new Christian Democratic government in 1989 might well be under pressure to negotiate a settlement with the FDR-FMLN, particularly if the Democrats recover the White House. And even if they do not, Congress might tighten economic and military aid in meaningful ways. The term "power-sharing"—the buzzword of the 1981 political season—may regain currency in Washington, apparently offering a cheap exit from an intractable situation.

Certainly the guerrillas would have no incentive not to hold out for the ultimate prize. They have a victorious ally next door who has proved that it is possible to defeat the United States with its own weapons. As Joaquín Villalobos, one of the five guerrilla commanders, told a television reporter on March 8, "The Reagan administration is becoming weaker." Consequently, he warned, Duarte and his generals "should think things over. Not everything is in their favor. Things are going to change, and there is still time for them to adopt an independent position"—that is, to sever their relationship with the United States.

As for the U.S. policy community, at this point the major reason it sees for remaining in El Salvador is the vast material and moral investment which has already been made. But in the post-Arias era, there will be new and compelling temptations to abandon what many would regard as a lost cause. If, in the eyes of this community, *any* course of action is better than trying to overthrow the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, does it not logically follow that anything is also better than trying to prevent the FDR-FMLN from coming to power in El Salvador? At a minimum, someone is going to have to explain why that prospect is enough of a threat to justify at least a half-billion dollars of aid a year, while Nicaragua—armed and trained by the Soviet bloc—is not.

4.

Some of the same questions will have to be asked with regard to Guatemala, where a Christian Democratic government is struggling to carve out a space between a guerrilla movement on the Left and a death-squad Right. It is no secret that one of the main reasons the Guatemalan military finally decided two years ago to convoke elections was the clear understanding that under no other circumstances could the country expect assistance from the U.S. Congress, or for that matter, even from the Reagan administration. But there were positive incentives as well. U.S. officials have long argued that there are better ways to fight Communism than brutality and the wholesale violation of human rights. Unfortunately, the Nicaraguan settlement allows the Guatemalan Right to interpret U.S. policy as a sudden acceptance of the doctrine of "ideological pluralism"—that is, indifference to the internal nature of regimes. If Washington can live with Communism in Nicaragua—some are bound to ask—why should it resent a "strong" government in Guatemala, particularly one aligned with the United States? But if that happens, what will happen to the leverage over Guatemala that two administrations have worked so hard to attain?

In Honduras matters are somewhat different. Central America's poorest and most backward republic—though Nicaragua under Sandinista leadership may soon compete for the honor—Honduras has never been a major focus of U.S. strategic interest. Its current claim to attention is its geographical location, and its willingness—despite official disclaimers—to allow the resistance fighters to operate from within its borders. The new relationship has by no means been one-sided; Honduras has received far greater prominence in our foreign-aid budget than ever before, and the evident need for political coherence in our Central American policy has made U.S. officials far more interested in the growth of democratic institutions there.

This is no small thing for a country whose history of military rule is as lengthy—though marginally less brutal—than that of Guatemala or El Salvador. The recent outbreak of anti-U.S. rioting in Tegucigalpa can be read in several ways, not the least of which is anger at the prospect of abandonment to the tender mercies of a neighbor heavily armed by another superpower, and naturally thirsting for revenge. It would seem that the United States owes Honduras some security assurances for the role it has played in the past. Since those now seeking to "correct" the policy believe it was wrong and even immoral, why should they wish to reward a co-transgressor? By the same token, however, if U.S. policy is henceforth to be grounded in respect for local political preferences, however undemocratic, why should the Honduran military remain in the barracks?

5.

It is authoritatively reported that Costa Rica's President Oscar Arias fears Ronald Reagan more than he does Daniel Ortega. If that is so, his apprehensions are about to be put sternly to the test, since one of the two will soon leave office while the other decidedly will not. Costa Rica is in many ways an admirable democracy, but one which, like other Central American

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states, has been steadly losing economic viability. As elsewhere in the region, in the 1970's it borrowed heavily from private and public capital markets; its public sector is large and often unproductive; it has developed an overblown welfare state based on clientistic and party networks; it suffers from low prices on its exports (coffee, sugar, cotton) and high prices on some vital imports, particularly oil and other raw materials.

The Nicaraguan revolution has only complicated this picture, by breaking up the minimal systemic coherence which made possible the Central American Common Market, and by frightening the private sector, which has shipped massive amounts of capital abroad since 1979. Not to put too fine a point on the matter, Costa Rica has survived for nearly a decade now on international charity, in which the principal donor has been the United States.

In some ways this is logical: the Costa Rican people are the firmest friends the United States possesses in the region, ones of whom we can be proud. Moreover, Costa Rica is the model toward which the United States is trying to build in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—a remote eventuality, perhaps, but one worth pursuing. The very existence of a democratic—in fact, social-democratic—commonwealth just across the border from Nicaragua is a terrible threat to the Sandinistas, since it gives the lie to their notion that their own synthesis of perverted nationalism and totalitarianism is the only alternative to death squads and oligarchs.

In addition, Costa Rica is profoundly affected by the course of Nicaragua's internal life. As former President Daniel Oduber has said, "Whoever loses the civil war in Nicaragua will move to Costa Rica." If that someone is the Sandinista Directorate, however, Costa Rica is not likely to be the country of choice. As it is, hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans, a tenth of the population, have already crossed the border. If the Arias plan fails to open up the political system next door, many more will do so.

Unfortunately, President Arias's approach to the Nicaraguan problem has been to divide the economic and security imperatives as if they had nothing whatever to do with each other. To paraphrase his views and those of his diplomats, it is the obligation of the United States and other Western countries to help make Costa Rica a "zone of peace," and to provide it with all of the material resources necessary to counteract the effects of a revolutionary threat next door. That threat is serious enough to justify more than $250 million a year in U.S. aid, but not, apparently, to address effectively the root causes of the problem. The European Economic Community has been sufficiently taken by this approach to add its own financial contributions: in the short run, Arias's tropical Wilsonianism has been quite productive.

This is an act, however, which cannot continue indefinitely. Arias's chief utility to the Western Europeans—and particularly to the Scandinavian Social Democrats who brokered his premature Nobel Prize—lies in his opposition to President Reagan and the Nicaraguan resistance. Once both have disappeared from the scene, the attention of the Western Europeans is bound to wander. At any rate, their own interests in the region are exceedingly limited, and unlikely to grow. This will be particularly true if the U.S. policy community becomes firmly convinced that Central America is irrelevant to our security—a position already embraced by the two remaining presidential candidates of the Democratic party.

Costa Rica thus faces the possibility that in the fairly near future it will find its share of the U.S. foreign-aid budget reduced, not out of pique over the Arias plan, but simply because all such appropriations are inevitably security-driven. Arias's ultimate legacy to his country may be not a generous American pension but geopolitical irrelevance and, with it, a reduced relationship with the United States. This prospect is more serious than Arias knows: Nicaragua's dictatorship—like its model in Cuba—can survive indefinitely on guns and police technology alone; Costa Rica's democracy must do better by its own people.

6.

FINALLY, something must be said about the Reagan administration's mishandling of Central American issues. From the very beginning it should have explained to the public the interconnected nature of the region—that what happens in Nicaragua cannot but affect El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Honduras. Instead, it backed into Nicaragua via El Salvador. The Sandinistas having revealed their true colors, diplomatic relations should have been broken and a trade embargo established early on.

Above all, the geopolitical factors should have been clearly explained. Since 1979, the Soviets have delivered over $2.5 billion in military aid to Nicaragua, more than half since 1985—a huge investment from a country which we are continually assured is heavily overextended internationally and, above all, "not interested" in Central America. But putting these facts clearly on the table might have interrupted progress toward a summit, and so they were relegated to a minor role. This made it possible for others to represent the U.S.-Nicaraguan imbroglio as nothing more than a spat—as one veteran journalist put it piquantly—between "gringos and spics," or between a declining superpower and a petulant former client state, when it was really between the United States and the countries whose support the Sandinistas have enlisted—the Soviet Union, Cuba, East Germany, Bulgaria, and Libya, as well as quasi-political communities like the Palestine Liberation Organization.

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The Central Intelligence Agency under the late William Casey failed to take Congress into its confidence, and in so failing, made it impossible to coopt Senators and Congressmen who might have listened to reason. Then, by going through the back door—a procedure which, given the stakes and also the number of intermediaries through which covert aid would have to pass, was bound to be discovered—the administration gave its opponents an issue with which to distract public attention for the whole 1987 legislative year.*

In addition to all this, the President's overheated rhetoric made it difficult to convince the public. It should not have been necessary to attribute to the resistance leaders the virtues of the American Founding Fathers; they should simply have been defended on their own merits, and as compared with the people they were fighting (and *their* allies). Characteristically, the best speech the President ever made appealing for aid to the resistance was drafted by a dissident Democrat who formerly ghosted for Vice President Walter Mondale. The Democrats in general have behaved with near-criminal irresponsibility; but with better policy management in the White House, they would have been less tempted to do so, and some of the more serious figures in the party might have been brought on board.

7.

WHEN ABC's Ted Koppel asked President Arias what he would recommend if the Sandinistas did not abide by the cease-fire agreements, he responded, "Well, let us hope that that does not happen." Clearly, President Arias cannot contemplate the possibility, for where would *that* leave him? In the new context of a multilateral settlement, any finding that the Sandinistas were guilty of serious violations (including with respect to their promises for internal pluralism) would have such far-reaching political implications as to be inadmissible. The evidence would have to be fudged, or denied, or questioned in such a way that nothing could be done about it. According to some administration insiders, President Arias harbors hopes that in such an eventuality the United States would rescue him from his dilemma by defining matters clearly and taking action; he may be in for a shock.

And this brings us back to our initial point. If the Reagan Doctrine is dead, then apparently the purpose of American foreign policy is to avoid involvement in conflict in the Third World. Under the new dispensation the promotion of democracy remains desirable, but only in countries allied to the United States; in the event that they pass into the Soviet orbit, nothing must be done to disturb the new status quo, however regrettable it might be—not only nothing involving American troops, but not even anything involving proxy forces or local allies.

This would seem to be a recipe for making the world safe for Communism. It is unclear how long such a policy can continue without exacting sharp, even catastrophic political costs both at home and abroad. But the stage is now set for us to find out.

* An entire book needs to be written about the way some senatorial staffers worked hand-in-glove with leftist journalists in Costa Rica and elsewhere to inflate the "Contragate" scandal far beyond its merits. The point is that the Reagan administration should have realized long ago that there are too many forces arrayed against covert action to enter into it without a minimum of congressional support.

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Who Is a Jew

Elie Kedourie

FORTY YEARS—the length of time which the biblical children of Israel spent in the wilderness—is a long period; for the state of Israel, now celebrating its fortieth birthday, this is therefore rightly an occasion for celebration and thanksgiving. It is also a period long enough to enable one to stand back and take stock, to reflect on the difference which the existence of the state has made for Jewish self-understanding, and on the new problems which it has brought forth or emphasized.

One of the issues which the existence of the state has created is that of who is a Jew. The issue arose directly out of the Law of Return, enacted shortly after independence, whereby Jews from all over the world could enter Israel and acquire citizenship there as of right. The issue is a legal one, involving a conflict, or lack of correspondence, between the norms and definitions of Halakhah—Jewish religious law—and those adopted by the Israeli legislature. But the issue of who is a Jew goes far beyond narrow legal considerations. It is an existential issue in the widest sense, which concerns anyone who is a Jew—whether he accepts or ignores or rejects such an identification or appelation.

In earlier times, among Jews still untouched by modernity, living within relatively self-sufficient communities, there was nothing problematic about the matter of who was a Jew; the question indeed would have been considered pointless. Such, for example, was, and still is, the case among Jews living in the shadow of Islam, or who, while no longer living in Muslim countries, still retain the ethos and outlook of their native lands. Jewish identity is unproblematic for them because Muslim law and institutions have defined those living under Muslim rule according to religious criteria, and have set a recognized place in the body social for Jews (as for Christians).

By contrast, the issue of who, or what, is a Jew became problematic in modern times when countries of European civilization abandoned or rejected the religious criterion in citizenship, and for it substituted birth, domicile, or membership in a nation, however that last term was defined. Where this happened, both Jews and the non-Jews among whom they lived became unsure of Jewish identity, of how such an identity came to be constituted, or what its essential characteristics were.

Various theories on this matter came to be propounded. Understandably, given the political power and the intellectual prestige of the non-Jewish world in which Jews were now trying to make a place for themselves, the theories advanced by non-Jews came to have great resonance and currency, not least among Jews themselves—those Jews, that is, who were open to modern European currents of thought and who, as I have noted, were unsure of what they were and where they stood.

One such influential theory, of rather recent vintage, is that invented by Arnold J. Toynbee and deployed in the ten volumes of his *A Study of History*, of which the first volume was published in 1934 and the tenth twenty years later. In Toynbee's scheme, once upon a time there was a Syriac civilization of which the ancient Jews formed a part. In due course this civilization lost its creativity, was overwhelmed, and finally became extinct. The Jews survived the shipwreck of this civilization, but their survival was a kind of life-in-death. They were, in Toynbee's terminology, which he borrowed from the science of paleontology, a fossil—an inexplicable survival, living but barely living, devoid of any creativity or vitality, carriers of an exclusive intolerance and a persecuting spirit inherited from the zealotry and narrowness of their ancestors.

It is clear that Toynbee's talk of fossils is a transposition, into a modish scientific vocabulary, of the ancient claim by Christian theologians that the Jews, having seen the light and rejected it, were in turn rejected by God and doomed to a life

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of wandering outcasts, their continued wretched existence being one of the proofs and evidences of the divine truth of the Christian religion. Judaism, in this reading, became petrified into a rigid legalism in which only the minutiae of religious observances counted—minutiae performed punctiliously, mechanically, meaninglessly.

Toynbee's particular account of Judaism and the Jews aroused great protest, but there can be no doubt that the theological view from which it ultimately derives made great inroads into the Jewish self-view in modern Europe, and accounts for the depreciation of rabbinic Judaism among wide Jewish circles, for the impatient dismissal of the rabbis, their universe of discourse, and their methods of argument as hidebound, absurd, meaningless logic-chopping.

ANOTHER modern answer to the question of who is a Jew is found in Jean-Paul Sartre's essay, *Reflections on the Jewish Question*. This book appeared in 1946, in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust and of the Vichy years when French Jews were frozen out of the body politic and the French police hunted down Jews (French and foreign) in order to deliver them up for dispatch to the extermination camps. Though Sartre does not discuss these events, they constitute the penumbra which surrounds his philosophical argument.

According to Sartre, in modern times and even earlier, in fact ever since the destruction of the ancient Jewish polity by the Romans, the community of the Jews has been "emptied" of any concrete historical character, whether national or religious. It is, says Sartre, the least historical of all societies, because its only memory is that of a long martyrdom, "that is to say, a long passivity." What unites the Jews is neither their religion, nor their past, nor their land. It is rather that they share "a common situation."

This common situation which Jews share, according to Sartre, is the "hostile contempt" of the surrounding society. A Jew in himself is nothing —*he is a Jew because other people consider him* such. Some Jews refuse to look their situation in the face; they try to pretend that being Jewish is a mere detail, that they are primarily Frenchmen or Germans, or simply members of the human race, and that the characteristics they share with their fellow human beings are much more important than their own specific qualities. But by so seeking to escape their fate, Jews flee into inauthenticity. What Jews on the contrary have to do, in Sartre's judgment, is to assume the risks and responsibilities of their common situation, to refuse to disguise the situation or to flee from it. Only then will they be leading a life of authenticity, freely confronting their fate with lucidity and truthfulness.

What characterizes the approach of both Toynbee and Sartre is a profound ignorance of Jewish history since the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans and the triumph of Christianity—ignorance of the vitality of Jewish experience in the Diaspora, of its continuity, and of the uninterrupted awareness on the part of individual Jews, generation after generation, of that continuity. The historical evidence for continuity and the consciousness of it is both abundant and incontrovertible. But in spite of that evidence, the sorts of ideas propounded by Sartre, as by Toynbee, have had their echoes and counterparts among many modern Jews who have believed that Jewish life is, to use the Sartrean term, a burden of inauthenticity, and who have urgently sought, one way or another, to cast off this burden.

One way to cast off the burden is to recognize the long centuries of "inauthenticity" for what they have been, and to disappear, collectively and individually, freely choosing and assuming a new and wholly non-Jewish identity. This is, for instance, what Arthur Koestler proposed for Diaspora Jewry following the establishment of the state of Israel, and what was signaled in the title of Georges Friedmann's book, *The End of the Jewish People?* (1969). For Jews who have followed this course, the "unnatural" condition of death-in-life has been changed into a natural and comprehensible one, namely, death.

Another way to bring an end to the ghostliness of death-in-life is through a kind of resurrection, in which the authenticity the ancient Hebrews enjoyed on their land is resumed and assumed by modern Hebrews. Such a way of putting it points toward the Zionist ideal, here formulated in an extreme version. This point of view was articulated with a cutting clarity by those figures in Palestine and Israel who formed what is known as the Canaanite movement. Thus the poet Uriel Halperin, better known by his pen-name Yonatan Ratosh, in a manifesto of 1944: "The Jew and the Hebrew can never be identical. Whoever is a Hebrew cannot be a Jew, and whoever is a Jew cannot be a Hebrew. . . ." And in another manifesto of the previous year addressed to "Hebrew Youth": "You are a Hebrew because the homeland is for you a real, actual, existing homeland—neither a dream nor something yearned for, nor something legendary. . . . For you the Hebrew language is your real, actual, practical language, a mother tongue, and a language of culture and a language of the soul . . . the landscape of your soul is the landscape of the homeland, and your past is the past of the homeland only."*

Yet equally with Toynbee and Sartre the Canaanites do violence to the Jewish past and the Jewish present. For this Hebrew man, so categorically distinguished from the Jew, and so lyrically

* I am indebted for these quotations to Yaacov Shavit, *The New Hebrew Nation* (1987).

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celebrated, where does he come from? For all his hard and shining authenticity, the Hebrew is, must be, a Jew and a descendant of Jews. That being so, we are back to where we started, and with no answer to the question of who or what is a Jew.

IN AN abridgement of his *Study of History* published in 1972, Toynbee turned a somersault. Having for over twenty years described living Jews as fossils of a dead civilization, he now—inexplicably, in terms of his scheme—celebrated them as the wave of the future. The reason had to do with another doctrine of Toynbee's, namely, that in the world of modern communications and modern economic arrangements, the best form of social and economic organization was that of groups dispersed over wide areas but related by language, culture, or some other tie—in other words, diasporas. Since the Jews after the destruction of the Second Temple had become purely a diaspora people, and had survived as such to the present day, they were an example and a model for the future.

Whether or not Toynbee was correct in his social and economic analysis, there is no doubt that at the end of a long life (he died in 1975) he had at last grasped a central truth about Jewish history. The aged Toynbee had reason to be impressed with his new discovery. For what the Jewish Diaspora signified was that a group devoid of political power and deprived of a territory it could call its own had nevertheless succeeded in maintaining its own cohesiveness and its own communal organization for something like two millennia, under a variety of regimes and in different cultures and civilizations, scattered in many countries and over many continents, and laboring under severe disabilities and sometimes murderous persecution.

Twice in their history in antiquity the Jews had to cope with military catastrophe and political defeat—marked by the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E., and of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. In themselves such events were nothing uncommon. But on other peoples the effect of defeat was far more serious and drastic, for in the religions of antiquity there was a very tight connection between a group and its god, and a defeat of the people meant a defeat of their tutelary god. For the followers of a pagan cult, there were thus no inner defenses against the vicissitudes of politics and war. What distinguished the Jews from their neighbors was the certainty that God was infinitely greater than any particular polity, and that all political action was perpetually under judgment. It is with this, we may think, that an explanation has to begin which can account for the extraordinary survival of this group under painful and extreme conditions of exile and dispersion.

Those who had charge of this exiled, dispersed, and powerless community were the rabbis, the expounders of the Law, both written and oral, as (in the traditional formulation) it was received by Moses on Sinai and transmitted to Joshua, and from Joshua to the elders, from the elders to the Prophets, from the Prophets to the men of the Great Synagogue, and from them to the rabbis in their successive generations. It is this chain of transmission and that which it transmitted, and in the process developed and enriched, that accounts for the character of Judaism as it has come down to us, and for Jews as we know them. It is here that we find the answer to the question of who or what is a Jew.

Far from being a fossil or from representing the mechanical repetition of formulas the meaning of which has been long forgotten, rabbinical Judaism after the catastrophe of 70 C.E. found in itself resources to organize and articulate a way of life in which there would be no denial or rejection of ordinary human desires and aspirations but rather their acceptance, regulation, and sanctification. This is obvious in relation to sex and marriage: at a wedding ceremony God is blessed, among other things, for having created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, mirth and exultation, pleasure and delight, and for making the bridegroom to rejoice in the bride. Similarly, there is no disdaining of the world of work, and of the prosperity which work can bring. As is declared in the *Sayings of the Fathers*: no bread, no Torah. Nor are the rich denounced simply on account of their being rich. On the contrary, great care is taken to emphasize that, in legal judgments, for example, being rich or poor should make no difference: "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty" (Leviticus, 19:15).

There is a great contrast to be noted here with the negative judgment against the possession (and thus the creation) of wealth shown in the thought of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 19:23-24 ("It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God"). One is reminded in this connection of what the daughter and biographer of the third Marquess of Salisbury wrote about that devout Christian, namely, that "while he had never known what it was to doubt the truth of Christian doctrine, he had all his life found a difficulty in accepting the moral teaching of the Gospels." What Salisbury found difficult to accept was the rigorism of the Christian ethic, which sometimes made it a less than reliable or helpful guide in the problems which confront us in our daily life. The Jews, by contrast, guided by an ethic anchored in the world and its predicaments, and which does not reject the world as irredeemable, have been enabled to cope with, and to be at home in, the world.

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The network of communities which made up the Diaspora also managed to be in fruitful communication and intercourse with the great variety of cultures and societies within which they had to live. Here the contrast is with Islam. When Muslims became a great power in the world, they came into contact with civilizations—Hellenic, Sassasnid, and Indian—which were incomparably more complex and sophisticated than their own. Pretty quickly the Muslims assimilated a great deal of what these civilizations had to offer. But in the intellectual history of Islam, this first burst of creative borrowing was also the last. Islam has had great difficulty, both as a body of religious thought and as a way of life, in coming to some accommodation with, and in understanding the mainsprings of, modern civilization, and today it gives the disconcerting impression of a culture functioning according to the political, social, and economic norms of antiquity, now locked in apparently sterile conflict and struggle with the no less powerful norms of modernity.

This kind of struggle, Judaism and the Jews have not had to wage. Jewish society, operating with a cast of mind developed in a Diaspora where intellectual attitudes and assumptions were those which rabbinic Judaism inculcated, has found modern civilization not a threat but an invigorating challenge.

It is crystal-clear, then, that there can be no Jews without Judaism, and that Judaism is what the rabbis have made, and will make, of it. Yet if Jewish religious thought is thus of central importance to the Jews, it must also be acknowledged as a problematic inheritance. In the premodern period, the intellectual unity-in-diversity of traditional rabbinical thought, which was the product of many centuries of discussion and debate, stemmed from the fact that each man of learning who joined the debate took for granted the authority of the Torah, written and oral, and couched his argument by appeal to, and analogy from, precedent (very much in the manner of the practitioners of English common law). This world has now disappeared. Though there is now synagogal organization of a kind and extent unknown before very recent times, the rabbinical universe of discourse has lost much of its traditional coherence, its customary parameters, and its familiar points of reference.

The loss has occurred in a modern world whose dominant characteristic is secularity. This signifies, among other things, a society made up of individuals who are aware of themselves as such, with their own distinct wishes and tastes, and a desire so to act and so to live as to satisfy their own standards of what is fit and right—in other words, a society far removed from the traditional society where there was an unquestioned consensus about modes of living and rules of behavior.

Can rabbinical thought deal with, and speak to, this novel situation, and do so unaided by the social pressures which operate in a small traditional society? Is there enough inventiveness to fashion a religious discourse which will satisfy the spiritual needs of a disparate multitude, and establish a free consensus about what is fit and proper? If not, then there will come about a definite separation—uncharacteristic of traditional Judaism—between the sacred and secular. The secular world will become an utterly alienated arena from which meaning has departed, and the sacred will be ineffectual, powerless, and empty, since its field of action will be, as it were, only the Sabbath, and not the other six days of doing and making.

This divorce between, as we may call it, Torah and life is already evident in that sector of Orthodox Jewry that styles itself "Torah-true" and that others style ultra-Orthodoxy. It is characterized by a refusal to treat with the modern world, which it dismisses as a place sunk in shallow materialism. Those who adhere to such an outlook deem it desirable to escape from the life of doing, of working, of innovating and into a life of pure spirituality. The outcome, however, is the same sort of rigorism which made Salisbury unable to accept the Christian ethic. The retreat from the practical life is dangerous and paradoxical—dangerous to those few who adopt it as an actual mode of life, and to those many of their followers who look to them as guides and exemplars; and paradoxical in that a life of pure, passive spirituality is in the end unsustainable, since spiritual men have to have food, clothing, and shelter, and thus have to encounter the predicaments and pursue the accommodations which mere living requires.

Religious thought has had to face another unprecedented situation, namely, the existence of a Jewish state and all the issues of ethics and politics which it raises. These are issues which, by and large, rabbinic thought had not had to face in the last two millennia. Now suddenly questions have to be formulated and answers found. Are ethics and politics mutually exclusive, or should they be? *Prima facie*, they cannot be, since politics means attending to the security and welfare of a particular group, and attending to such a common concern involves responsibility. For the political leader or statesman who has to carry such a responsibility, his is clearly an ethical burden.

In the long centuries when a Jewish political authority did not exist, the rabbis had little occasion to consider the wide range of ethical issues involved in the exercise of power and responsibility (except of course as these applied to the administration of the internal affairs of the Jewish community). But the Bible, which does refer to a period of Jewish political authority, is hardly

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lacking in episodes that point up the burden of ethical responsibility lying on a leader's shoulders. Thus we are told in Exodus 32 that when Moses came down from the mountain and saw the people worshipping the golden calf which they had made, he stood at the gate of the camp and called on all those who were on the Lord's side to join him. When the sons of Levi did so, he ordered them into the camp, with their swords at their side, to "slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor," and "there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." Then there is the episode recounted in I Kings, when Solomon orders the death of Adonijah his half-brother, who had previously claimed to be David's rightful successor and whom Solomon now suspected of working to revive that claim and thus open the door to contention and civil war.

The moral judgment suitable to such cases cannot be the automatic application of a simple categorical rule. Figures like Moses or Solomon who carry public responsibilities are, of course, as much under judgment as private persons with private responsibilities, but judgment in their case has to take into account, and weigh in the balance, the public interest which they must defend against the private interest on which they may encroach in the process. Such judgment must scrutinize circumstances and probabilities and weigh the possible risks of alternative courses of action, all of them perhaps in some measure or another undesirable, fraught with danger, and feared in themselves or in their consequences.

In the modern world, and particularly in the Western world, an idiom and a manner of speaking about politics have gained much popularity, and there has been a tendency to adopt this idiom in Jewish religious comment about politics as well. One variant of the idiom is based on the well-known saying of Jesus which enjoins rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's. Whatever was originally meant or intended by this saying, it has been widely taken to imply that Caesar's realm is irredeemably separated from God's; that politics is hopelessly immoral, or at any rate amoral; and that those who would seek the kingdom of God must have nothing to do with earthly kingdoms. Here ethics inhabits an independent realm and imposes its vetoes, its condemnations and excommunications, from the outside. But high-minded as such fulminations are, they invariably turn out to be unconvincing and ineffectual.

Another variant of the popular Western political idiom derives from Immanuel Kant, who argued that, to be good, all action must exemplify universal maxims of morality which are themselves the dictates and promptings of the conscience. But to make individual conscience the arbiter does nothing to guarantee that actions will always and by definition be good. Adolf Eichmann, we may remember, justified his deeds as the conscientious following of his duty. It is also by no means the case that the dictates of conscience, whatever they may be, will be automatically or readily translatable into beneficial action; good intentions do not always result in good actions, and good actions can have evil consequences. There is great peril in thinking that politics can be the application of general ethical rules, and that judgments about political actions can be made simply on the basis of universal maxims.

ALTHOUGH discourse about politics and its predicaments and pitfalls is not prominent in rabbinical writings, we may be sure that traditional rabbinical thought would not have acquiesced in the separation of ethics and politics, and would not have made the individual conscience, proceeding on its own, and unaided by the resources of the written and the oral Law, the judge and arbiter of politics.

In a little book entitled *Collaboration with Tyranny in Rabbinic Law* (1965), the scholar David Daube considered the manner in which, during the early centuries of the Common Era, the rabbis dealt with the grim issue of how to respond when non-Jewish authorities demanded that a Jew be handed over to be killed. To read Daube's skillful account of the manner in which rabbis, sifting the circumstances, citing texts and precedents, and arguing from analogy, debated among themselves whether such an action was lawful and under what circumstances; to see how changes in rulings were effected from case to case; to follow Daube's patient unraveling of different points of view in debate and the specific reasons given for them, is to be given a precious glimpse into the possibilities of an ethico-political discourse for today. Such a discourse, drawing on the resources of traditional rabbinic literature, might formulate a *derekh erets*, a moral-halakhic jurisprudence, offering guidance as to what is decent and prudent in political conduct. Given the requirements and predicaments of the modern world, the undertaking would be very difficult. But if Jews are Jews because of Judaism, and will remain Jews because of Judaism, then an undertaking of this kind is mandatory.

Such an undertaking would have to be sober, open-eyed, and firmly anchored in the realities of political life. Not the least of its difficulties would be that the Jewish state, whose political problems it would have to address, is a secular state, something which rabbinic thought did not have to consider. The temptation would be very strong, therefore, to retreat or to take flight into another world where somehow, as if by magic, secular reality, and the predicaments of living within a society of states, would vanish.

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The flight from reality may take many forms. It may be a flight into utopianism—a utopianism which, indeed, infects so much of modern political thought, and which was present at the origins of Zionism, and of socialist Zionism in particular. The belief here was that a society of self-determining nations, or of nations from which inequality and exploitation had been eradicated, would be one in which all conflict would disappear.

Or the flight may take the form, equally utopian, of confusing the existing state of Israel with that ideal state which will, in the fullness of time, be ruled by the Anointed One, the Son of David. "Out of Zion shall come forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," is a prayer recited in synagogue services; but the Zion and the Jerusalem of which the blessing speaks cannot be the present state of Israel and its capital. Unfortunately, in some religious circles in Israel the wish to see the two as one has issued, particularly since the 1967 war, in a messianism which has sought warrant in ancient prophecies, and searched for signs of their coming fulfillment.

These two forms of utopianism are far from being novel or particularly modern temptations. With regard to the latter in particular, the rabbis long ago taught that the restoration of the House of David will happen in God's own good time, that neither must it be hastened by human action, nor its advent computed and foretold. Firmly to lay hold of this injunction and all that it implies is the sure foundation of any Jewish political discourse rooted in reality, and adequate to the demands of the time.

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William F. Buckley, Jr. and American Conservatism

James Nuechterlein

IN 1955, when William F. Buckley, Jr. published the first issue of *National Review*, the conservatism that he and his journal represented stood, isolated and forlorn, at the very outer margins of intellectual and political respectability. A quarter-century later, with the election of the most conservative President since the 1920's —and one who claimed *National Review* as his favorite magazine—Buckley and his conservative movement had moved to the vital center of American political culture. It was an extraordinary progression, and one that, properly understood, can tell us much of what we need to know to make sense of American politics in our time.

The occasion for such an analytical exercise is provided by the appearance of John B. Judis's biographical study, *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives.** It is an odd sort of book, one in which subject and author make an awkward fit. Judis is a man of the Left, a senior editor of the socialist journal *In These Times* and a contributor to a variety of other left-wing magazines ranging from the *New Republic* to the *Progressive*. Given the incompatibility between his politics and Buckley's, one might reasonably expect to encounter here an ideological demolition project, a radical's unveiling of the villainies of a leader of the reactionary Right.

Yet one gets no such thing. If Judis's portrait of Buckley cannot properly be described as admiring, neither is it anything like a hatchet job. The book reads as if the author had come to an agreement with his subject, according to which, in exchange for access to Buckley's personal papers and an open door to interviews with his family and friends, Judis would undertake to offer as impartial and dispassionate an ideological reading as possible. That, anyway, is the sense the reader gets, although Judis cannot resist an occasional political zinger, and much of the rest of the time writes as if he were working through clenched teeth.

Overall, the book has a distinctly equivocal and uncertain tone. Having exercised restraint in his political judgments, Judis compensates with gratuitous criticisms of Buckley's style of life and career development. It is Judis's dubious thesis that success has spoiled Bill Buckley, that his original critical edge has been lost through entry into the Establishment and descent into "celebritydom." Judis appears to hold it against Buckley that his side has prospered and that, in the process, Buckley himself has become the sort of public personality to whom attention is paid for often trivial reasons. There is a peculiar process of critical displacement at work here, and it gives the book a certain off-center, unfocused quality. Judis, one feels, pushes his essentially petty criticism of Buckley's social role in place of the potentially serious ideological critique he has denied himself. The result is a work that never adequately comes to grips with its subject.

But it is not, for all that, a bad book, simply a less than fully satisfactory one. Judis has amassed and arranged in good order a great amount of personal and political detail, and he has a number of sensible (if also some silly) things to say about the development of conservatism, and Buckley's role in it, over the past three decades. Beyond that, his evident effort at ideological restraint, whatever its costs, is not only commendable in itself but properly allows the reader to focus attention on the book's subject rather than its author.

2.

IT IS characteristic of William Buckley that he should take the risk of placing himself in the hands of a potential enemy. As an individual, he frequently displays quite uncon-

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servative affinities for tempting fate, engaging the new, and seeking after the unknown. Buckley has said of himself that for all his philosophical and spiritual attachment to conservatism, "temperamentally I am not of the breed."

It seems clear that Buckley's ability to hold on to stable and traditional beliefs even while he indulges his instinct for change and variety traces to an unusually strong sense of self, which in turn finds its origin in childhood and family circumstances that were at once reassuringly secure and constantly stimulating. His father was the remarkable Will Buckley, a lawyer and businessman from Texas who made a fortune in oil in Mexico early in the century before getting embroiled in counterrevolutionary activities that finally (in 1921-22) resulted in his expulsion from the country and the confiscation of his property. Those events reinforced tendencies, already well developed, toward unyielding hatred of revolutionary politics and an equally intense devotion to the operations of the free market. After Mexico, Will Buckley directed his efforts to rebuilding his fortune (it took time, but he managed it successfully) and raising the large family that he and his wife, Aloise Steiner, had begun after their marriage in 1917.

Bill was born in 1925, the sixth of ten children. The Buckleys were an extraordinary family. Father ruled with an imperious and rather aloof hand (he spent much of his time in New York on business away from Great Elm, the family estate in Sharon, Connecticut, and he often preferred to communicate with his children through letters and memos rather than in person). His wife, a gracious, kindly, extroverted Southern belle, balanced Will's patriarchal sternness with gentle affection, even as she reinforced the deep Catholic piety that bound the marriage and the family together.

THE Buckley family was a fortress unto itself, whether at Great Elm or in its frequent excursions abroad. (By the time Bill was thirteen, he had lived for varying periods in Venezuela, France, and England.) Will, a cultured and widely-read man, personally supervised the children's early education, and a succession of tutors, Mexican *nanas*, governesses, and special instructors turned the various Buckley residences into family schoolhouses as well. The education was rigorous and challenging—Bill had studied Latin and was fluent in French and Spanish before he entered prep school—and when Will was in residence he turned the dinner hour into a tutorial on current learning and a catechetical instruction on the proper views to be taken toward contemporary affairs.

It was more than the circumstances of their life or the natural clannishness of a large family that made the Buckleys particularly close. Will, who had grown up a deeply traditional Catholic in Protestant Texas, and whose formative adult experiences left him a profound enemy of any variety of Left politics (Communism was the very Antichrist), passed on to his children, apparently without exception, a counterrevolutionary ethos that marked them in their own minds as outsiders and rebels against the dominant strains of American life. They applied to themselves the Tory anarchist Albert Jay Nock's conceit of "the Remnant," a permanently embattled and cohesive minority upholding elite standards of civilization amidst the barbarian darkness. Will, for all his laissez-faire principles and business acumen, had nothing but contempt for vulgar materialism, and he urged his children to use the freedom his money gave them to pursue lives of intellectual and moral excellence. When it came time for the Buckley children each in turn to venture out of the tight family circle into the wider world, they did so as ideologues and crusaders determined to set their society straight as to its political and theological heresies.

None did so with greater enthusiasm or argumentative flair than Bill. The star of his father's dinner-table interrogations, the brightest and quickest in a pack of able and competitive siblings, Will's namesake absorbed without question the family orthodoxy. But he was not always, in his early years, an entirely successful proselytizer for the faith. Aware of his own precocity, imperious in manner, he antagonized as many of his contemporaries with his arrogance and snobbishness as he impressed with his brilliance. Even members of the family found him hard to take at times; one of his older sisters, Judis tells us, referred to him as "the young mahster." In his prep-school days at Millbrook, Buckley, for all his ability, was a favorite neither of his teachers nor of his fellow students. He began to master the arts of social acceptability in his years in the army from 1944 to 1946; there he learned to moderate his instinctive combativeness and to distinguish between ideological compatibility and personal friendship.

Buckley flourished at Yale in his career there from 1946 to 1950. He starred in debate (especially in partnership with L. Brent Bozell, later his brother-in-law) and achieved his highest desire, chairmanship of the *Yale Daily News*. In those years he also met Pat Taylor, member of a very wealthy and very conservative Canadian family, whom he married just after graduation. If Buckley had gained maturity and social polish, however, he had not lost his ideological edge. He managed to outrage the Yale administration with his public attacks—later elaborated in *God and Man at Yale* (1951)—on the university's failure openly to advocate free-enterprise economics and the Christian religion. If doctrines of academic freedom got in the way of such advocacy, he suggested, so much the worse for them. Buckley found sup-

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port and encouragement for his ideas in the populist majoritarian views of a renegade member of the Yale political-science department, Willmoore Kendall, who spoke of a "public orthodoxy" that any society had the right to define and enforce against recalcitrant minorities.

Following graduation, and after discarding ideas of going on to law or graduate school, Buckley first brought himself to public attention with the publication of *God and Man at Yale*. Next followed a brief (and apparently uneventful) stint with the CIA in Mexico, after which he moved to New York City and busied himself for eighteen months, along with Brent Bozell, in the research and writing of his most controversial work, *McCarthy and His Enemies* (1954). If *God and Man at Yale* had made Buckley outrageous, the book in defense of McCarthy—which appeared just before the Army-McCarthy hearings that brought low the junior Senator from Wisconsin—made him, as Judis notes, a pariah.

After a series of false starts, Buckley brought out the first issue of *National Review* late the following year, portraying it and himself standing "athwart history, yelling Stop." For years to come, Buckley's position in American political thought remained as isolated as that remark indicates, and he was generally dismissed as an intellectual oddity rather than a significant contributor to national political debate. Even the Goldwater movement of 1964, to which *National Review* undoubtedly made a significant contribution, seemed in its ultimate disastrous failure against Lyndon Johnson a marginal and sectarian enterprise. Yet history, oddly enough, was gradually moving in Buckley's direction, even if in a manner neither fast enough nor full enough to satisfy him. For conservative politics and ideas began to take on quasi-respectable status by the late 1960's, less perhaps in their own right than as alternatives to the widely-perceived inanities and excesses of the New Left and the New Politics.

As conservatism's fortunes looked up, so did Buckley's career. The process began with his quixotic but highly publicized race for mayor of New York in 1965 and with the sprightly account of the campaign he published the following year, *The Unmaking of a Mayor*. That book, as Judis observes, revealed to the public a side of Buckley previously known only to his family and close associates. Instead of the arrogant, derisive, condescending persona with which people thought themselves familiar, they encountered in *Unmaking* an engaging and charming figure who, for all his customary archness, could laugh at himself as easily as at others.

The man whom the Left, when it noticed him at all, had loved to hate turned out to be not nearly so personally obnoxious as had earlier been thought. Indeed, Buckley's circle of friends has always included people—Murray Kempton, John Kenneth Galbraith, Norman Mailer, and many others—whose political views are entirely alien to his own. (It should be noted as a general point that Judis provides a good deal of evidence to indicate that Buckley is a genuinely decent man: loyal and generous to his friends, forbearing, forgiving, and tolerant in personal relations, incapable of racial or religious prejudice, and a prolific dispenser throughout his adult life of anonymous gifts of charity.)

As Buckley's audience widened and softened in its attitudes toward him, his marketability increased. He had already begun a syndicated column in 1962 and the TV show *Firing Line* followed in 1966. The greatest breakthrough came five years later with *Cruising Speed*, a narrative diary (laced with personal revelation and ideological commentary) of a week in the frantic Buckley life. It provided the perfect form for Buckley's skills, and it was probably the best received of all his many books. Buckley's sailing diaries, *Airborne* (1976) and *Atlantic High* (1982), also got favorable notices, although *Cruising Speed*'s successor, *Overdrive*, appearing a dozen years after the original, received a number of nasty and sarcastic comments relating to its presumed self-absorption, snobbery, and vulgarity.

Judis seizes on the reaction to *Overdrive* to drive home his argument that the Buckley of recent years has sunk to the status of "celebrity intellectual." Buckley has been damaged, Judis suggests, by the acceptance of conservatism and by his own drift into public esteem, self-satisfaction, and consequent loss of critical bite. In Judis's estimation Buckley performed better as impassioned critic of liberal regimes than he does as complacent defender of Ronald Reagan, with whom he has close personal as well as political ties. Loss of combativeness has made Buckley "mellow and uninteresting"; no longer a "public outrage," he has been defeated by his own success.

It is difficult to know what to make of such criticism. If Buckley is afflicted with "malaise," as Judis says, it certainly has not affected his productivity. Between his work at *National Review*, his column, *Firing Line*, some 50 speeches a year, articles and reviews of various sorts, and his books (he writes at a book-a-year pace, alternating between nonfiction and the popular and well-crafted Blackford Oakes spy series, which began with *Saving the Queen* in 1975), Buckley's output suggests the efforts of a small syndicate, not a lone individual. It also places Judis's frequent slighting references to Buckley's social life in proper perspective: either Buckley does not party nearly so often as Judis indicates, or if he does, he has such extraordinary energy that it does not interfere with his truly Stakhanovite work record. If Buckley has a problem in this area, it is that he is so overbur-

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dened that his work—as in his column, for example—occasionally displays evidence of excessive haste.

To say that Buckley has lost his critical edge is simply to put a negative spin on conservatism's relative success in recent years. Buckley has not necessarily gone soft; rather, he now has something to defend. In any case, he has not become nearly so accommodationist as Judis sometimes suggests. If Buckley's manner of expression has to some degree softened, his bedrock, hard-Right beliefs have changed very little—a point Judis is forced to concede, although he ignores the significance of that concession for his radical-to-establishmentarian thesis. As for Judis's related argument that Buckley has lost his position as the dominating central figure of the conservative movement, that again reflects conservatism's enlarged and more varied condition, not necessarily a loss of vitality on Buckley's part.

Considered objectively, Buckley's writing—at its best—is today more finished, more commanding, more persuasive than it has ever been, and *Overdrive* is among his best books, not his worst, even if Judis and other critics ignore its strengths in order to engage in misguided and fussily *ad hominem* cultural criticism. Buckley writes about the wealth and luxury that have always been part of his life in a straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, and his attitude on such issues is not vulgar but innocent. He does not flaunt his wealth but neither does he—vulgarly—apologize for it. Indeed, he is grateful for his material advantages, as for the other good things in his life, and the petition of gratitude with which he concludes *Overdrive* would better be emulated than scorned.

It makes little sense to focus criticism of Buckley on the conditions of his life or the way he writes about them. Buckley's life and career have been by any reasonable measure a success. It is his ideas that need attending to.

3.

THE traditional claim of the Jesuits was that if they could have a child through age six, they would have him forever. Will Buckley had his children for considerably longer than that, and the results showed. The evidence indicates that Bill Buckley, although a naturally rebellious child, absorbed from his father a set of fundamental beliefs—Roman Catholicism, anti-Communism, and laissez-faire economics—from which he not only has never departed but which he never has felt the need to question. For the first (and most essential) of those beliefs he attempted publicly to proselytize only at the outset of his career—and then in generic form; but in support of the latter two he has been, throughout his life, a most zealous defender of the faith. That spirit of zealotry, more than the beliefs themselves, is what has given Buckley's public life its distinctive character. Virtually all American conservatives, after all, are sympathetic to free-market economics and opposed to Communism; it is the intensity and purity of Buckley's devotion to those principles that sets his conservatism apart.

Buckley's first public cause bore all the trappings of a religious crusade. In *God and Man at Yale* he not only argued that the university's alumni should see to it that the faculty inculcate in students the principles of Christianity (as well as of individualism and free-market economics), but he cast his argument in terms that breathed the spirit of traditional Catholicism, with its dictum that "error has no rights which truth is bound to observe." Faculty members who continued to foster atheism and socialism (or even humanism and liberalism) should be sent packing. In the cause of upholding objective truth, academic freedom must give way to the principle of consumer (in this case alumni) sovereignty.

Buckley intended an academic counterrevolution. The free marketplace of ideas must be replaced by right ideas, by the "public orthodoxy" Willmoore Kendall had spoken of. The free marketplace, Buckley argued, did not in any case exist; Yale had already announced it would not hire Communists and, he was sure, it would not hire racists, either. What he was proposing, then, was not the imposition of limits that had not previously been observed, but rather their more precise and narrow definition.

Some critics of Buckley's book (especially Catholic ones) noted that it represented, in Judis's words, "a strange hybrid of religious traditionalism and libertarian and individualistic economics." Buckley had applied to the Yale situation the complex of values he had learned from his father. He apparently had not noticed, any more than had his father, that the parts of this value system did not cohere in perfect harmony. His critics delighted in pointing out to him the long tradition in Catholic social thought antagonistic to unregulated capitalism and excessive individualism. Those criticisms seem to have left at least some impression; Buckley thereafter was more sensitive to the tension between virtue and freedom that was in fact to become one of the abiding preoccupations of the *National Review* circle in years to come.

BUCKLEY's assault on conventional liberal assumptions in education piqued the curiosity (and, in most instances, aroused the fury or scorn) of the intellectual community, but it involved, in the end, only an obscure corner of public concern. That was not at all the case with his next such assault in the book he wrote with Brent Bozell, *McCarthy and His Enemies*. If there was anything that inspired passionate unanimity among liberals in the early 1950's it was the propo-

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sition that Senator McCarthy and his reckless demagoguery on the issue of domestic Communism represented a threat to civil liberties and an objective moral evil. Opposition to that proposition they took to be not merely wrongheaded but evidence of inadequate moral perception. (Several years later Dwight Macdonald said to Buckley, "You know, you *never* understood the real *evil* of McCarthy." Buckley, as one might expect, responded that indeed he had not.)

Buckley and Bozell attempted to establish their case by distinguishing between McCarthy on the one hand and McCarthyism on the other. They criticized the Senator on a number of specific points, while striving to vindicate what they took to be his larger purpose, "the elimination of security risks in government." And their conclusion, in words that were to live forever in the annals of liberal infamy, expressed confidence that "as long as McCarthyism fixes its goal with its present precision, it is a movement around which men of good will and stern morality can close ranks." It is for that statement, if for nothing else, that a large number of Americans—not all of them liberals—will never entirely be able to make their peace with William Buckley.

The issue of McCarthyism made Buckley a pariah, but it was more than that which placed him and the early *National Review* outside the mainstream of American political conversation. The 1950's are popularly recalled as an age of consensus, and it is indeed the case that at no time in modern history have Americans enjoyed so much fundamental agreement on so many essential issues as they did during those years. They were agreed first of all on an anti-Communism that resisted not just Marxist doctrines but Marxist categories of thought, and that resolutely opposed the advance of Soviet influence beyond its existing borders. Liberals and conservatives quarreled, often noisily, over the tactical details of foreign policy, but on the essential strategy of the containment of Communism there was bipartisan agreement.

In domestic affairs, the consensus was less extensive, but still more far-reaching than at any time since at least the 1920's. Most Americans supported a system of mildly-regulated free enterprise undergirded by a moderate welfare state. They disagreed among themselves as to the proper degree of regulation or provision of economic security, but few wanted either to dismantle the New Deal or radically to extend it.

Buckley and his friends would have no part of the Eisenhower consensus. They treated the President himself in dismissive terms that bordered on contempt, and they worked tirelessly (and mostly in intellectual isolation) to undermine the foundations of the centrist unity over which he presided. While virtually all other observers, then and since, have characterized the age as essentially conservative, the eccentric angle of vision of the Buckleyites led them to portray it as one of regnant Liberalism (the word was regularly capitalized), a condition accounted for by "Fabian operators" who had obtained control over both political parties. The *National Review* conservatives—in the context of the times, they might better be termed radicals of the Right—*did* want to dismantle the New Deal. They were free-market purists to whom the faintest whiff of Keynesianism was anathema, and they viewed virtually any form of the welfare state as an unacceptable interference with personal freedom and an insidious threat to the maintenance of moral character.

But it was the particular nature and style of their anti-Communism that most galvanized the Buckley conservatives and set them apart from the prevailing national mood. For the editors of *National Review*, the dominant strain of anti-Communism in the country—and in the America of the 50's, anti-Communism was a political assumption, not a matter of discussion—lacked sufficient intensity and passion and depth. It did not *possess* the minds of its holders as it should. This insufficiency was reflected, Buckley and his associates thought, in anti-McCarthyism, in the willingness to countenance negotiations with the Soviet Union, in the kind of strategic timidity that satisfied itself with containment when the end pursued should be rollback and, ultimately, the final destruction of Communism everywhere. All this added up to a policy that, nominally anti-Communist, in fact was pervaded with the spirit of what *National Review* perceived (and relentlessly scorned) as anti-anti-Communism.

One can perhaps best get the sense of *National Review*'s anti-Communism by comparing it with the ideology of anti-fascism that dominated the Popular Front mentality of the 1930's. In each case, the term implies more than opposition to a particular regime or even a political philosophy. It suggests a comprehensive counter-ideology of its own, a system of total politics, one consumed by what it opposes and which therefore constructs a political universe in terms that derive almost exclusively from the felt imperatives of the conflict with the enemy.

THE emotional force of the Buckley circle's anti-Communism is most effectively conveyed in the work that became for them an almost sacred text, Whittaker Chambers's *Witness* (1952). Buckley himself was profoundly moved by the book, and in 1954 began a close friendship with the author that lasted until Chambers's death in 1961. Chambers's account of his journey from Communism to anti-Communism, culminating in his epochal struggle in court against Alger Hiss in a case that took on mythic proportions, remains an enormously powerful work. The personal and political torments that

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Chambers endured and the agonies and soul-wrenchings they inflicted on him give the book a Dostoevskian quality that makes it far more than just another anti-Communist memoir. People of any religious sensibility whatsoever cannot but be moved by its spiritual intensity, and its political cautionary power endures: the most complacent and prosaic reader comes away from *Witness* with a reawakened sense of the incalculable stakes involved in the struggle over Communism.

Yet *Witness* is at the same time a most unreliable base on which to build a politics. It is written out of the hermetic experience of the ex-Communist, and it conceives of politics in essentially apocalyptic terms. Here the only significant actors are Communists and ex-Communists, and in the end one is either a revolutionary or a counter-revolutionary. (Mere conservatives, Chambers informs us, are helpless in the struggle against Communism because they do not comprehend that the conflict cannot be won or even understood "except in terms of total sacrifice.")

From such a perspective, critical intermediate distinctions easily get blurred. Thus for Chambers the New Deal was, however innocently, on the wrong side of the revolution/counterrevolution divide and therefore objectively aligned with those it thought it opposed: "Men who could not see that what they firmly believed was liberalism added up to socialism could scarcely be expected to see what added up to Communism." Chambers radically misread the American situation (even if the particular circumstances of his case made that misreading quite understandable):

> The simple fact is that when I took up my little sling and aimed at Communism, I also hit something else. *What I hit was the forces of that great socialist revolution, which, in the name of liberalism, spasmodically, incompletely, somewhat formlessly, but always in the same direction, has been inching its ice cap over the nation for two decades.* [Emphasis added]

This is the mentality which informed *National Review* at its origin and which one still perceives today in its frequent collective reference to all the forces on the Left, from liberals to Marxists, as "the Hive."

The irony of the *National Review*'s relationship with Chambers is that after writing *Witness* Chambers edged away from some of the formulations in it that Buckley and others on the Right had so eagerly taken up; Chambers became uneasy when his erstwhile students failed to make the distinctions he now was ready to recognize. Buckley could not persuade Chambers to sign on with *National Review* as a senior editor at its founding, and Judis makes clear that his later brief association with the journal (1957-59) was strained and uncomfortable. Chambers argued with the other editors over what he took to be their excessively rigid views on domestic and foreign issues alike. He contrasted *National Review*'s conservatism with his own "Beaconsfield position." The reference to Disraeli suggests what Chambers had in mind: a more flexible and politically sophisticated conservatism that would make necessary accommodations with modern economic conditions and, without at all relaxing its philosophical and spiritual opposition to Communism, take a non-apocalyptic approach to U.S.-Soviet relations.

Yet Buckley, for all his warm regard for Chambers, was not about to turn *National Review* in a pragmatic direction or to give up the journal's pride of place in being out of step with history. The magazine was populated heavily with ex-Communists, people who had been over into the future, seen that it did not work, and become obsessed with relaying that message to their fellow citizens, most of whom, never having been tempted by the Communist heresy in the first place, found it difficult to make sense of the passionate urgency of those who had, and had then changed their minds. It was not easy working with zealots: Buckley expended extraordinary amounts of personal energy mediating among the many people of extreme moods and ideologies who filled his journal's editorial chairs.

National Review in the 50's and early 60's remained a journal of the hard Right. It supported McCarthy to the bitter end (devoting two issues to tributes to him on his death in 1957), defended the white South against integration in the name of states' rights (Buckley, personally without prejudice, flirted with racial assumptions in his arguments against civil rights), and maintained what Judis aptly terms a "quasi-religious" attitude toward the cold war. The magazine's political purity—what Buckley termed "maintaining the paradigm"—revealed itself in a refusal to choose between Nixon and Kennedy in 1960. Buckley's conservatism still evoked the spirit of Nock's concept of the Remnant, aristocratic in temper and lukewarm toward democracy, and so remained at the margins of political or intellectual influence.

Yet events were moving Buckley and the conservatism he represented toward a position of greater political relevance. In part, that movement came from Buckley's own actions. *National Review* might border on political extremism, but Buckley always had enough sense—and innate decency and sanity—to distance himself from the truly flaky Right. The journal repudiated Ayn Rand's extreme libertarian individualism in the late 50's, and, in a more significant action, dissociated itself from the John Birch Society in a number of articles in the early 60's. The break with the Birchers, as Judis rightly notes, began to edge Buckley and *National Review* back into the intellectual respectability they had forfeited with

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their support of McCarthy (even if the break cost the magazine a number of subscribers and some significant financial support).

The 1960's in any case marked a radical change in mood from the 50's, and so witnessed a substantial alteration of political possibilities. On both Left and Right, stability and political placidity gave way to rapid, sometimes convulsive, change. The reawakening took place in the first instance on the Right, in the Goldwater movement of 1964 that signaled a revolt of the Hoover-Taft wing of the Republican party against the moderate Dewey-Eisenhower-Rockefeller forces which had controlled GOP presidential politics since 1940. Goldwater's nomination resulted in a landslide victory for Lyndon Johnson in November, but the correlation of forces within the Republican party had been permanently rearranged. Buckley and *National Review* gave enthusiastic support to the Goldwater uprising, even though Buckley harbored private reservations over Goldwater's abilities and over the potential damage a severe Goldwater defeat might do to long-term conservative fortunes. The Goldwater forces, for their part, kept Buckley and his journal at arm's length; one suspects they understood that it would do Goldwater's chances more harm than good if he were to become identified as Buckley's candidate.

THE defeat of Goldwater seemed to confirm Buckley's worst fears concerning the future of conservatism. The Republican Right had been discredited in the debacle, and in President Johnson's Great Society program a reinvigorated Left began the most ambitious extension of social reform since the 1930's. Yet within a very few years everything had turned around. The Left's ascendancy disintegrated into conditions of chaos and bitter internal division, a situation approaching a Hobbesian war of all against all. And so, virtually by default, conservatism found itself presented with new political and intellectual opportunities. Thus to understand the Right's revival, one has to keep one's eyes on the Left.

The problems for the Left began with the Great Society, which had its successes but which from the beginning cost more than had been expected and produced less than had been promised. At the heart of the Great Society agenda was the War on Poverty, which had as a particular target the improvement of conditions of life among urban racial minorities. Statistical indices of wealth for the urban poor turned upward, but social conditions—whether in education, crime, drug use, or family stability—appeared simultaneously to deteriorate. Worst of all, the nation's inner cities were torn every summer from mid-decade onward in waves of arson, looting, and random violence. Liberalism had promised that the problems of the cities could be dealt with through the extension of New Deal reform methods; the riots made this position look feeble, and they created a backlash on racial issues rooted not simply in traditional attitudes of racism (though there was plenty of that) but also in sober reassessments of prevailing liberal views on the sources and solutions of the pathologies of urban life.

But it was Vietnam that provided the essential source of the Left's breakdown. The problem was not only the intensely divisive nature of the issue itself, but the immense ideological overflow it generated. Ever since the late 1940's, liberalism had found itself in an unnatural condition of ideological restraint. Postwar prosperity and, above all, the deradicalizing tendencies of the cold war had restricted the instinctive leftward urges of the liberal community that had flourished under the New Deal. By the mid-60's, enormous ideological pressure had built up, and Vietnam provided the occasion for it to explode. The spectacular and undisciplined nature of that explosion bore a direct relationship to the protracted period of time in which liberals had repressed their true feelings and adopted a pragmatic moderation that could not begin to satisfy their inner longings.

Vietnam brought an end to the bipartisan policy of containment and, more importantly, to the anti-Communist consensus on which it had been built. That meant the obscuring of the clear distinctions which had carefully been drawn between liberals and radicals since the dissolution of the Popular Front. The New Left repudiated the generation-old prohibition on Marxist analysis and on cooperation with Communist groups, while the New Politics, on this as on so much else, fell into hopeless confusion and uncertainty. Most of the newly radicalized liberals opted in the end for a politics of generalized moral outrage that avoided actual identification with the Marxist Left, but at the same time they discarded their principled opposition to Communism in favor of a lofty "Communism-is-irrelevant" position. This allowed them to adopt radical stances without regard for the company they found themselves in or for the results of the positions they took.

AS liberals lurched leftward into neo-radicalism, conservatives found themselves occupying the deserted Center. Suddenly all the terrible things about liberalism that Buckley and *National Review* had been saying for years—things which at the time (and still in retrospect) seemed extreme and inordinate—took on an air of sober reality. There was a new congruence between the way Buckley perceived the liberal community and the way it actually behaved. When Buckley observed in 1956 that he would "sooner be governed by the first two thousand people in the Boston telephone directory than by the two thousand members of the faculty of Harvard Uni-

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versity," his observation had seemed clever but facile and overdrawn; a decade or so later, with the campuses—Harvard chief among them—overrun by febrile and deracinated radicals, it seemed the epitome of good sense and a sound starting place for locating oneself politically. Not all that many Americans actually converted to conservatism in the late 60's and early 70's, but a great many of them did begin to draw away from the Left.

It was during the 60's that Buckley, in Judis's estimate, began the process which in time transformed him from outsider to insider, from radical ideologue to conservative establishmentarian. That is true in the limited sense that an altered political landscape caused Buckley to be seen in a new perspective; things he said, for example, during the New York mayoral race concerning crime and welfare that were brushed aside in 1965 as reactionary and racist came up for sympathetic reconsideration a few years later as the urban crisis deepened and conventional views on the subject appeared increasingly implausible. The political spectrum, in other words, had on at least some issues moved far enough in Buckley's direction to bring him within the compass of political respectability.

It is also true that, given the new circumstances, Buckley showed himself willing to make greater concessions to political reality than he earlier had been. Richard Nixon, when he ran for the Republican nomination in 1968, assiduously courted Buckley's support (that he felt the need to do so indicates the increased conservative influence in the party), and Buckley, who knew well that Nixon was not a *National Review* conservative, nonetheless kept the journal evenhanded as between Nixon and Ronald Reagan, an action that angered a number of the magazine's editors. (Reagan had just been elected Governor of California in 1966 and Buckley considered him too inexperienced for the presidency.) In November, *National Review* endorsed Nixon over Hubert Humphrey, its first endorsement of a candidate who was not a movement conservative.

But it was also in connection with Nixon that Buckley indicated the degree to which he was still committed to the conservative paradigm. Nixon, the quintessential conservative pragmatist, moved gradually toward the Center during his presidency, especially after the Republicans did badly during the 1970 congressional elections. That move, culminating in Nixon's announcement in July 1971 that he would visit China, led Buckley to bring together a number of conservative activists—the Manhattan Twelve, as they became known—to consider what must be done. After some debate, the group announced that it was "suspending support" of the President. The administration remained obdurate: a month later Nixon announced wage-price controls and two months later his intention to visit Moscow the following year to negotiate the SALT treaty. By the end of the year the Twelve declared their intention to support Congressman John Ashbrook as an opponent to Nixon for the Republican nomination in 1972. It was, of course, an act of sheer political folly, and it went precisely nowhere. Buckley and *National Review* beat a lame retreat and, when the Democrats nominated George McGovern, offered lukewarm support for Nixon's reelection.

THE Watergate scandal not only wrecked the Nixon administration but short-circuited the national trend toward conservatism. Yet while the Democrats took back the White House in 1976 (*National Review* strongly supported Reagan's narrowly unsuccessful attempt that year to take the Republican nomination away from Gerald Ford), the Carter administration's ideological flaccidity, plus its unfortunate combination of ineptitude and bad luck, foreclosed any possibility of a genuine liberal revival. By the late 70's the nation found itself in a condition of political, economic, and ideological stagnation.

If, by that time, conservatism could not accurately be described as holding a dominant position in American political thought, it had undoubtedly, if erratically, improved its condition since the early 1960's. And as conservative influence grew, the ranks became more crowded and more varied. In the late 50's, Buckley and *National Review* had constituted whatever there was of conservative thought. (American conservatism has always fared better politically than it has in the intellectual realm.) In the aftermath of the convulsions of the 60's, that was no longer the case.

There was, on the one hand, the New Right, which had its origins in the conservative populist campaign of George Wallace in 1968 but which broadened to become a general reaction against modernist liberal values in virtually all areas of American social life. Even though the New Right deviated little from *National Review* on specific issues, its populist character made it somewhat alien to Buckley's "elitist" conservatism. The differences had to do essentially with matters of style and emphasis. The New Right social base was in the lower middle class, a long way removed from Buckley's patrician style or instincts. It focused its attention on social concerns such as busing, crime, racial quotas, and welfare, while Buckley, although agreeing with New Right positions on these matters, paid more attention to issues relating to foreign policy and free-market economics. A number of New Right publicists, Kevin Phillips perhaps chief among them, took delight in portraying Buckley and *National Review* as hopelessly out of touch with the grass-roots concerns of Middle American conservatism. (Buckley in response dis-

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missed Phillips as "a Jimmy Breslin conservative.")

Another, somewhat ambivalent, addition to the ranks of the Right came in the form of neoconservatism. Neoconservatism was a byproduct mainly of the Left's disintegration in the late 60's. Neoconservatives were for the most part disillusioned liberals who broke with their former leftist allies over what they considered the reflexive, guilt-ridden anti-Americanism into which much of the Left had stumbled in the wake of Vietnam. (A great many neoconservatives participated in the early stages of the antiwar movement but parted from it in its latter radical stages.)

The neoconservatives (most of whom came to accept the term only under extreme duress) brought to the Right a measure of intellectual recognition it had formerly lacked. Prior to the neoconservatives' emergence, liberals for the most part dealt with intellectual challenges from their Right by not dealing with them, by ignoring conservative arguments and the people who made them. It was harder for liberals to disregard the neoconservatives, who had gained intellectual recognition while still on the Left and who therefore could not so easily be treated as if they were not there. Neoconservative critiques of the Left achieved a visibility and thus an influence that earlier criticisms had not.

Relations between Buckley conservatives and the neoconservatives were often distant and uncomfortable, especially at first. The two groups had different histories, different intellectual styles, different preoccupations. Several in the Buckley group (though not Buckley himself) treated the neoconservatives as interlopers and tended to suspect them of closet liberal sympathies (which, the way *National Review* defined such things, was not an altogether unfounded suspicion). Many neoconservatives, for their part, could not accustom themselves to regarding as allies people whom all their lives they had considered beyond the bounds of intellectual respectability.

The nomination and election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 brought clarity and shape to what, for much of the previous decade, had been an inchoate political and ideological landscape. Men and women who had wandered uncertainly amid the shapeless politics of the 70's were suddenly brought up short and made to decide, "Which side are you on?" Reagan was a galvanizing and polarizing figure, a man toward whom it was nearly impossible to maintain a neutral or dispassionate attitude.

The experience of the neoconservatives typified the situation. Few, if any, neoconservatives had been early supporters of Reagan; most had regarded him with variable mixtures of condescension and mistrust. Once he was nominated, however—and even more once he was elected—the majority of them drifted, at varying rates of speed and with varying degrees of enthusiasm, to his support. The dynamics of politics in the Reagan era made neoconservatives, by the late 80's, far more unambiguously conservative than they had been a decade before. (It also cost them what Irving Kristol called their "social-democratic wing"; it is noteworthy that two of the three men to whom Peter Steinfels devoted individual chapters in his 1979 study *The Neoconservatives*—Daniel Bell and Daniel Patrick Moynihan—are no longer included in neoconservative ranks.) The Reagan phenomenon thus consolidated and brought to successful fruition a conservative impulse that had been gathering, off and on, for a decade and a half.

Buckley and his friends, of course, experienced nothing of the neoconservatives' ambivalence over Reagan. Buckley by 1980 had been politically and personally close to the Reagans for years, and in Reagan, Buckley had for the first time in his life a President who spoke his language and whom he could support not with reluctance or reservations but with wholehearted enthusiasm. Reagan's dedication to laissez-faire ("government is not the solution to our problem; it is the problem") and his fervid anti-Communism embodied the deepest commitments that had driven Buckley from the beginning of his public career. Judis argues that Buckley had joined the Establishment; one could as well say that, in Reagan, the Establishment had come to Buckley. It would have been an act of ideological supererogation for Buckley to remain in opposition once Reagan entered the White House.

Not that Buckley has been entirely uncritical of the administration. He has goaded it from the Right and watched nervously for signs of backsliding. *National Review* has on a number of occasions found reason to complain that the President's advisers are not letting Reagan be Reagan. Buckley has watched with dismay and disappointment as the administration has faltered and foundered in the wake of the loss of the Senate, the Iran-*contra* disaster, and the collapse of the Bork nomination. He worries about what he sees as the administration's excessive eagerness in its declining days to negotiate with the Soviet Union, and he wonders uneasily, as do many others on the Right, about the future of conservatism once Reagan has departed the scene. Still, given the contingencies and inevitable compromises of politics, Buckley surely understands that in Ronald Reagan his conservative paradigm found presidential hands as safe as it has ever known or is ever likely to know.

4.

Judis concludes his book on the same note of pessimism that appears to dominate most contemporary estimates, whether

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from the Left or the Right, of the conservative future. Conservatism today, he says, is adrift, no longer in control of public opinion, lacking in leadership, internally divided (traditional conservatives don't like neoconservatives who don't like New Rightists), and altogether in parlous straits. At the same time, he writes, what is bad for conservatism might paradoxically be good for Buckley. Buckley, Judis thinks, has always performed best under conditions of adversity. Made soft by success and adulation, he might well be revived by the slings and arrows of a rejuvenated Left. It would be of benefit to Buckley, Judis suggests, to find himself embattled and isolated, once again defiantly standing athwart history and yelling stop.

Perhaps so, but there is good reason to question both the description of conservative fortunes and the prescription for Buckley's career.

If conservatism has its problems, as it no doubt does, it is only reasonable to point out that the movement is still, in general terms, in better condition than it has been at virtually any other time in modern American history. It is, after all, liberalism and not conservatism that today is afraid politically to speak its name. If conservatism has not established hegemony over American political life, let alone over American intellectual life, it has certainly broken the hegemony of the Left. (Conservative intellectuals tend to excessively gloomy estimates of conservative fortunes because the particular circles in which they move are the ones in our society that are the least receptive to conservative ideas; but the world beyond the universities, the churches, and the media is far more welcoming.)

Although there is clearly no prospective leader on the political horizon comparable to Reagan, leaders of his magnitude come along at best once in a generation; what is of greater significance in this connection is that every one of the Republican candidates for President this year came from the conservative camp. The GOP, which at the presidential level has fared very well in recent electoral history, will thus remain an impregnable conservative fortress into the foreseeable future.

That conservative forces are divided is entirely understandable and not in itself a cause for concern. Such is the nature of all political coalitions: consider liberalism under the New Deal, divided at least as badly as contemporary conservatism and yet able to function, over the long run, quite successfully. In terms strictly of prospects for national success, an ambitious young political leader today would probably still be better advised to cast his lot with the Right than with the Left.

As for the advice to Buckley to revert to his original radical oppositionist stance, that might or might not make sense in narrow career terms, but it is almost certainly a bad idea in terms of its implications for conservatism or for Buckley's place in the conservative movement. Buckley's writings in the 50's were curiously out of phase with actual political conditions. He wrote on domestic issues as if liberals were in their most zealous stages of New Deal enthusiasm (if not beyond), and on foreign policy as if the Popular Front mentality still controlled liberal sensibilities. Neither was in fact the case, and so Buckley and *National Review* existed at a curious distance from political reality as most Americans experienced it.

One might best characterize the 50's as a conservative golden age, an era in which an essentially conservative President reigned over a tranquil and orderly society committed to democratic capitalism (modified by a limited welfare state) at home and to a sober anti-Communist strategy abroad. It was against *this* spirit that Buckley set himself, establishing as his goals a set of reactionary ideals: the abolition of academic freedom (which no genuine academic, of whatever stripe, could countenance); the defense of McCarthyism (a political and moral blight from which the anti-Communist cause has never entirely recovered); restoration of a laissez-faire political economy (which ordinary Americans would overwhelmingly have rejected); and opposition to virtually any manner of civil-rights reform (which has ever since left all conservatives open to suspicion of racism).

It is not Buckley's strength but rather his weakness that virtually everything he writes has an ideological edge. Judis recounts Buckley's failed attempt to write the Big Book: the exercise in political philosophy that would rise above the issues of the time and establish its author's credentials as something more than a talented controversialist. No one familiar with Buckley's extensive publications can suppose that his failure to produce such a work stems from an intellectual disability. The problem is one of habit of mind.

Buckley's intellectual style is that of the debater, wholly preoccupied with the effort to score points. Ideas for him are not possibilities to be considered, pondered, wondered over; they are rather forces to be marshaled in the cause of a truth that on all major matters, and most minor ones as well, is already fully known. Every intellectual engagement becomes a polemical occasion. All this leaves the impression, no doubt unfair to Buckley, of a mind that is terribly quick but not finally very deep.

Buckley's habit of mind reflects itself politically in his persistent concern with maintaining the conservative paradigm, a concern that marks him as in many ways the mirror image of the utopian idealists in the adversary culture of the Left. He likes to invoke against them Eric Voegelin's warning about "immanentizing the eschaton," but his

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own preoccupation with paradigmatic politics indicates a similar ideological inclination.

All of which suggests that Judis's advice would take Buckley precisely in the reverse direction from that he might most fruitfully follow. (It is odd to see a radical telling a conservative that he ought once more become a reactionary.) Buckley's recent tendencies (rather slight in any case) to relax the paradigm in light of the practical ought to be encouraged, not disparaged. Buckley is at his most attractive when he is being least immediately ideological. The side of him revealed in his private life—the catholicity of interests, the immense and tolerant curiosity, the openness to the new—might with great benefit find greater expression in his politics.

The suggestion here is not that Buckley turn himself into some kind of Ripon Society Republican. It is rather that he reconsider his old friend Whittaker Chambers's Beaconsfield position. Conservatism in America, after all, is no longer a marginal or fringe phenomenon. It is edging toward the center of things. If it wants to supplant liberalism as the national political establishment, it will have to act accordingly. (That one can react to political events with flexibility without sacrificing philosophical integrity is revealed in the career of George Will, a man whom one suspects Chambers would have admired greatly.)

It may be, of course, that William Buckley, having considered all this, has nonetheless knowingly committed himself to the role of the gadfly, the man who intentionally makes of himself a permanent outsider. If so, he must know that he has condemned himself to the enduring frustration of the ideologue functioning in an immutably pragmatic society. There are worse political fates, no doubt, but better ones, too.

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Three Books

Daniel Fuchs

WHAT I would like to do here is write on three books which stay with me after sixty years and sometimes turn up in my dreams: *Walls of Fire*, a novel by Marc Worth (a pseudonym), privately printed in 1925 or 1926; *Silberstein*, a French novel, its author's name not remembered by me; and W.N.P. Barbellion's *The Journal of a Disappointed Man*, which Ralph Sipper, the Santa Barbara rare-book dealer, tells me is long, long out of print. The first two books, the novels, were stolen from me decades ago, lost and never recovered; my paperback copy of Barbellion's diary is very old, not fit for reading—the pages crackle in the hand and splinter. To tell the truth, I don't know what would happen if I read these old books again, if I would be disappointed, if I could safely recommend them any more, and it may be that I'm better off not being able to reread them.

My father had a place, the news- and candy-stand concession, in the Whitehall Building at 17 Battery Place, at the tip of Manhattan. In order to get there from our home, we took the Brooklyn Broadway elevated train across the Williamsburg Bridge to the Canal Street station, and then transferred—walking out in the open, on the street, for a distance of two or three blocks, as I remember it—to the West Side IRT subway local, which, going on its way down the line, got us to the end of the island and the Battery. As the rush-hour mobs of us went thundering over the outside stretch, in the dark of early morning and at night, we passed a pawnshop which had an ornate, marbleized sign on the building wall above the double store-windows, with the proprietor's name on it: SILBERSTEIN. There was always a silent bond between me and the name there when I went with my father to his place of business, and it is the marbleized sign that comes back to me, I don't know how many times over the years, in memory.

I don't remember now where I found the French novel *Silberstein* and came to own a copy. I probably picked it up at the open sidewalk counter of one of the out-of-the-way used-bookstores in the downtown Brooklyn Borough Hall business and government district. The book may possibly have had a claim to fame at one time and for all I know was well known—it seems to me I later ran across a mention of it once or twice somewhere and, after all, a publisher thought enough of it to bring it over and have it translated. Silberstein, the young man the book is about and who gives it its title, is years away from maturity, starting in life, but he has that remarkable seriousness of mien and grown-up outlook that young people in Europe seem to possess, often and most winningly even as very small children. Silberstein is aware of the pitfalls, but he is taken up by the scene that is lying open before him. He is captivated by the beginnings of experience: he reaches out for the pleasures of the days, for the enticements he sees around him, the excitements of meetings with new friends, of love and sex. The days here are sun-tinted, fresh with airy breezes and the sense of promise. Silberstein is Jewish, and so to an extent, so early in the century too, he is deprived and shut out, a denial that makes his desire all the more piercing and intense.

The book was a revelation to me. Coming on it as I did, by accident, I was unprepared. This obscure novel, found in a bin on a side street, had the effect of making me see there were more ways in the world than I knew, and it is perhaps possible to understand why there was a start of recognition, a quickening at the heart, every time I went by the pawnshop and its sign.

We read to pass the time, to admire or not admire, to be entertained and to be instructed. And then there is the book that grabs hold and is beyond criticism or judgment. We sit in the chair reading and don't know we're reading. We forget ourselves. That is how it is with *Silberstein*. We are beguiled by the vision of these young people, by their maturity and the surprise of their pursuits and longings, and if it is a strange and fanciful vision, it has been made real and accessible to us by the author. I realize I am using words, not images, that I'm not giving a satisfactory impression of the novel. I'm not comfortable with exposition of this kind, never have confidence in the

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didactic manner of writing, am no good at it, and secretly believe abstractions are false as much as true. The best way I can suggest the quality of this book is by recalling the mood and wonder of Alain Fournier's *The Wanderer*, Raymond Radiguet's *The Devil in the Flesh*, and by referring to the movie some years ago of the Italian Finzi-Contini family and their friends, if you saw that movie and liked it as much as I did.

JUST AS we hurtled along in New York, making the transfer on our daily hegira, so do countless numbers of Londoners go pounding over the streets making their own connections, also on foot, on their way to and from their places of work. I think London is predominantly a city of walkers and commuters. I used to stand at the Piccadilly edge of Green Park and watch the masses of them swooping by in flight, heading for Victoria Station and their homes after work at nightfall, and it is a notion I have that the author of *The Journal of a Disappointed Man* was in his day a part of one of those hurrying throngs.

W.N.P. Barbellion was born in a small English country town in 1889, decided at fourteen to become a naturalist by profession, worked as a newspaper reporter, came to London in 1912, was on the staff of the Natural History Museum, and died in 1919. Barbellion (I never knew or could find out why he chose this pen-name; my guess is he just liked the look of it, and garnished it with a few initials, which would be in keeping with his volatile turn of mind; his real name was Cummings) was over six feet tall, skinny "as a rake," we're told, and had an insatiable curiosity, an insatiable appetite, for everything going on. At twenty-five, he was railing at a friend of his, an artist, trying to pump him up. "Why don't you marry her out of hand and be done with this dalliance?" The man had an idea he was in love with a blonde beauty but held back, refusing to let himself be committed. Barbellion berated him—he insisted on being a spectator, watching the maelstrom from the bank and would not plunge. "I can tell you what's the matter with you—you're a landscape painter. You'll grow to resemble that mean, Jewy, secretive, petty creature J.M.W. Turner and allow no human being to interfere with your art. A fine artist. . . !"

In his laboratory work with birds, fishes, and insects as a naturalist, it wasn't so much that he liked the small animals—he had an esteem for them, respecting their resolute ways and personalities. "I probably know more about Lice than was ever before stored together within the compass of a single human mind!" is the entry for August 15, 1915, and then he runs on for six hundred words, delving into the Greek, the ancient world, Paris of the Middle Ages, giving the anatomy of the insect and its foibles, telling who died of them, who had to be sewn up in a leather sack before he could be buried. Barbellion wasn't niggardly. His entries take up a page, a page and a half, and more, and he shared everything without restraint. "Two old maids sat down to dinner tonight" (July 16, 1913), "one German youth (a lascivious, ranting, brainless creature), a lady typist (who takes drugs they say), a dipsomaniac (who has monthly bouts and has to be carried upstairs and has to be put to bed), two invertebrate violinists who play in the Covent Garden Orchestra, a colonial lady engaged in a bedroom intrigue with a man who sits at my table. I hate them all."

I play a game with my old paperback copy of the *Journal*. I dip into it at random and, before the page disintegrates and gets away from me, I come up with another gem, in almost every case of tantalizingly quotable quality. Barbellion was short-changed. His literary reputation suffered from the outset because he had had the bad luck to be afflicted all his life with illness and to die a tragically early death. Critics and bystanders, assessing his work, invariably centered their attention on his nobility of spirit, asserting how in spite of his maladies he maintained a valiant interest in life, recording his passion for classical music, for literature and painting, and in the process the intrinsic value of his writing got dispensed with. Barbellion went to the Albert Hall, the *Journal* shows the pleasure he had in music, in Beethoven, his favorite. And Barbellion himself could feel sorry for himself at times and mourn with the rest—the "disappointment" in the title, with its downside connotations, was no help and a wrong steer from the start (but how else could the book be titled?)—but the gloom and sorrow were overdone, the least of the entries, and hardly a true representation of the work. It isn't that kind of book at all. Barbellion was always on the run, feisty, egotistical, rambunctious, depressed, bawdy, a natural, strikingly free and modern for someone three-quarters of a century ago: ". . . the woman at once began to unlace herself" (this on a bus), "exposing a large, red udder, which she swung in the baby's face. . . . 'Come on, there's a good boy—if you don't, I shall give it to the gentleman opposite.' Do I look ill-nourished?"

On a Sunday, he enjoyed himself at Petticoat Lane, checking out the peddlers at the different stalls hawking their goods—caps, clocks, braces, shawls, songs, indecent literature, coats, pants, all of it esoteric to Barbellion, a bazaar. He took in the gamy homemade street vaudeville: "The Jew wore spectacles and had a soft ingratiating voice and brown doe-like eyes. . . . 'My wife says my face is my fortune.' 'O! No wonder you're hard up and 'ave to take in lodgers. . . .'" There is another half-page of jokes and patter, two and a half pages in all on the sights and shouts of the market. (He had a thing about Jews and Beethoven's Fifth.) But most of all his preoccupation was with women. He had an unabashed, continental infatuation with them. He had an eye for the leg,

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the jut of the butt, the "rondeur of her bosom," as he called it somewhere. The references to women appear again and again in the *Journal*, ahead of literature, ahead of Beethoven. "To me," he announced (October 7, 1914), speaking as a professional naturalist, "woman is *the* most wonderful being in existence."

The trouble was, there was no time. The *mal-ach-ha-movess*, the Hebrew Angel of Death, had him gripped, rode him without mercy and hung on, or, as the Gentile Anglo-Saxons say, his misfortunes pursued him with a fury. I was never clear what exactly his malady was. They said "a progressive paralysis," "a disseminated sclerosis" —he had everything the matter with him. He would list his ailments for himself: "—stoppages, coughs, threatened blindness, threatened consumption, an impregnable colon," and once, in a desperate ribaldry, catalogued some of his symptoms: ". . . excessive pendiculation, excessive oscitation, excessive eructation, dyspnoea, sphygmic flutters." I can't find the passage now where he describes how he tried to solace a physician and make it easy for him to break the news. " 'It's not as you think, don't mind. I knew when I came in . . .' " (that he had the disease, whatever they called it that time). " 'But it's unusual in one so young,' the doctor said." He carried on, mocked his infirmities, was sprightly and endearing, but at bottom there was a rage, a despairing hatred of himself, a contempt for the body that had failed him and was worthless, and it was more than he could bear that it would all go on, the world and its bounty, without him. "Self-disgust," is the last entry, in its entirety, when he finally went down and succumbed.

IN THE spring term of my senior year in high school, in 1926, I was editor-in-chief of the school magazine, the Eastern District High School *Daisy*. The faculty adviser, delegated to supervise the publication, was a member of the English department whose name was Adolph Gillis. Looking back, I see him in the distance, absorbed, remote, a solitary figure, and I am conscious of a debt I owe him. It happened that I hadn't had him for a teacher in any of my English classes, but I had seen him often in the din and clutter in the halls when the bells rang for the change of classes and we moved on to the next subjects on our programs. He was well built, with a broad chest, a large head; his face was acne-scarred. He had been born in Belfast—it's a puzzle to me now how I picked up this piece of information. He had a blunt, decisive way of speaking, and could be and was intimidating. His diction was precise, clipped. There could be an amused smile on his lips, but it was cryptic, private, sardonic, and when we spent time together on the magazine, he remained reserved. There was no informality. I know he certainly didn't dislike me, but on the other hand I can't say he liked me. He never commented on my work as editor or praised anything I wrote. The truth most likely is he just didn't think too much about me and had no opinion one way or the other. Our meetings, such as they were, took place in an empty classroom at the end of the day. He was always in a hurry to leave and be on his way. He was supposed to look after the magazine and watch what went into it, but he saw he could rely on me and that I was doing the work without him, and he left it to me—the editing, the student contributions, the dummying and layout—and was gone. Just as it's impossible for me now to recall how I learned where he was born, so it's lost in the past how I heard of the novel he had written, or managed to get my hands on a copy and was able to look through it; I was impressed with him, he obviously had a hold on my imagination with his stern bearing and aloofness, and I garnered whatever I could put together about him. The novel was *Walls of Fire*. His pseudonym, Marc Worth, had to do with the almost valueless German marks of the post-World War I period, a sardonic choice, but this may be my idea, something I deduced and made up on my own.

When I think back to myself as I was then, not yet seventeen, I remember a hollowness, an unease weighing on me, the days going by and nothing resolved. I believed my field was literature and I had it in my head to be a writer, but I didn't know what I would write about. The books we studied in class were irrelevant—*Silas Marner*, *Ivanhoe*. I dismissed them. Adolph Gillis's novel was about people living on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. What struck me first about it was the thought that he faithfully taught the books in the curriculum, apportioning four and six weeks to each of them, but when it came to his own work, he abandoned those gray, timeworn narratives as inconsequential, as I myself had done, and wrote in a raw, new, modern realism, dealing with characters and a background that were breathtakingly familiar to me and at hand. Nowadays I am sometimes mentioned—because of my 30's Williamsburg books—as a forerunner of the American Jewish novel, a distinction which leaves me blank and uninterested, mainly because my work derived from Mr. Gillis's novel, got its start from it, and he is, of course, unknown, lost. *Walls of Fire* has the life of the tenements in it, to me for the first time in fiction. It is there—the density, the summer heat, the broken linoleum, the oilcloth covers on the kitchen table, the ugly blue oilpaper coverings pasted on the toilet-door windows. The book is concerned with the young people on the Lower East Side, the generation after their immigrant fathers and mothers, now grown and reaching out to make a place for themselves. An effluvium arises from the intensity of their desire as they contend with their circumstances, as they entangle themselves with one another, hoping to find a deliverance in love and

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companionship. The surprise to me was the discovery that the life of the tenements, so burdensome and nondescript in the day-to-day actuality, could take on a luster and wonderment on the printed page and become incredibly transformed. It was a discovery that came to me, at seventeen, in a rush of exhilaration, that I silently absorbed, without thinking or knowing I was absorbing it, and made my own.

IN THE summer, on graduation, I went to work on the Brooklyn *Jewish Chronicle*, a weekly newspaper with which Mr. Gillis had some kind of connection—he was the overall director or editorial consultant, not a full-time job—and where he thought I might be useful but where in the end I did all of the writing and reporting. To get to the *Chronicle* each day, I took the Brooklyn Broadway El, but this time going in the opposite direction, to the Myrtle Avenue station where, again, I had to change, crisscrossing and transferring to another elevated train—this one high above the Broadway El, made up of old-time rickety wooden cars—which clattered along, running west past the Brooklyn Navy Yard, Fort Greene Park, the Brooklyn *Daily Eagle*, and into the Borough Hall area, where the paper had its offices.

The offices—which couldn't have consisted of more than four rooms, a general workroom, and two or three adjoining cubicles—were over a store, at the top of a flight of uncarpeted stairs. One of the cubicles was the managing editor's office, but he was generally out in the field or somewhere, and the office was left vacant, with the door standing open. I have only a fleeting recollection of him. He had red hair, owned a pith helmet, which he kept in the office, and gave people to believe he had been on safaris, which may have been perfectly true—there were some snapshots lying around in the office. His name was Rusty Fell. The backers or investors turned up occasionally. There were four, always standing together in the large, outer room, not in Fell's office—he would be out, as usual. The four were all of them tall and elegant, in fine business suits, slim, cigar-smokers, of European extraction. They were resigned, smiled, and were soft-spoken. I never heard a quarrel.

My job was to handle the material that came in—releases from the different organizations, social notes, wedding announcements, and such; it was up to me to rewrite them in proper newspaper style and to determine the space each of them was to be given. Sometimes I followed up a legitimate news item and made calls. I carried copy to the printer. The *Chronicle* was a tabloid of a dozen pages, the last page or two filled with legal public notices. There wasn't much to do.

I swiftly wrote up the announcements and releases, and then had the rest of the day to get through. I was more or less in charge and was left alone; often I was the only person in the place. The quadrille of backers came by. I made my daily cat's-cradle trip on the elevated lines, transferring at Myrtle Avenue and arriving punctually on time every morning. The printing plant we used was some distance from the office, near the Brooklyn *Daily Eagle* building, and in the afternoons, when I carried copy to the plant, I always walked, idling and stretching out the errand. The sun beat down. The streets were almost deserted, people away on vacation, the government bureaus going at half-speed. I looked at the great Brooklyn *Eagle* press, rumbling on display in the outsized show-window they had there, and, in the heat and torpor, a discontent would come over me, a restlessness. I would yearn to get away, I didn't know where I wanted to go—to some other city, another, better way. In Mr. Gillis's novel, there is the account of the daughter in the family who is being pressed to marry a businessman. He is heavy-set, older than she is, not what she wants; but even though she knows she won't marry him and doesn't care to be with him, she nevertheless goes driving with him into the country and sits beside him, because he owns an automobile and because it is an escape, if only for the day. I see her sitting in the car with him, thoughtful, dreaming, feeling guilty and deceitful. The walls of fire of the title have a meaning in relation to the climactic action of the book, a grand blaze when a candy factory, important to the family, burns to the ground. But the true meaning of the title, of course, relates to the fiery old brick tenement buildings themselves and the anguished needs and passions of the young people who live in them. It's hard to hold on to an understanding of the nature of desire as it exists in youth. The recollection of its intensity grows dim as we get along, the force and urgency recede in the mind, and after a certain point I'm convinced it becomes beyond our power to recapture those longings as they were, and we don't really remember them at all, although we think we do.

AS THE summer wore on, the flow of material that came into the office tapered off. People were out of the city, the societies and philanthropic organizations were in hiatus, and suddenly I was hard put to it to find enough material for the paper. I expanded the letters-to-the-editor column, fattening the letters as I tidied them; I wrote some myself, under assumed names. I made up elaborate house ads, centering my astute good-will copy on the page with wide, open margins. I then had the idea of serializing Mr. Gillis's book, an idea that delighted me not only because it would use up space but because I liked the book and knew I would enjoy reading it again and working with it. Mr. Gillis understood the problem I was having at the paper, that there was no one to help me, and he gave me his consent to go ahead. My plan was to present the novel in full

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one-page installments of newsprint as a special summer feature. What I did was to study the text so that I could make appropriate sections, breaking off each installment at a suitable point. I separated the sections in the book with rubber bands slipped over the pages, and it is this copy of the novel, which Mr. Gillis supplied when he gave his consent, that I held on to and owned—the book battered, the pages pulled away from the backing after the typesetters got through with it—and that was eventually picked up by somebody somewhere down the line, and stolen from me.

I used to stand by the typesetter at the printing plant, intrigued by the huge linotype machine. I always took the book away for safekeeping after the week's installment was set up, and while I waited for the man to finish, it was amusing to watch the Rube Goldberg contraption in operation—the hard-metal keys slithering down the big, odd-shaped, triangular pan; the keys aligning themselves in a row at the bottom of the pan; the pot of cooking lead at the side sending a thread of molten lead over the keys, in this way forming the slugs, one after the other, one on top of the other, and making up the column of type.

One man seemed to be doing most of the work on the serialization, and a kind of acquaintanceship developed between us, the two of us together, stuck in the yellow glare and hell of the composing room. He was thin, bony in his undershirt, that is, in the top half of the loose-fitting, one-piece B.V.D. underwear garment that he wore. He was mild-mannered, bald, with spectacles, sweaty. He sat hunched over his typesetter's keyboard, squinting at the novel, which was spread wide on the rack before him, and tapped out the keys, never taking his eyes off the book. The shop here had the King's County, Brooklyn, government work, the fine-print official documents and public legal notices, and one day, on an impulse, I asked him if it was a relief, if it made a difference to him to set type on a piece of fiction for a change.

"Oh, no," he said. It wasn't the change. It was the book, *Walls of Fire*. "It's the most wonderful story I ever read," he said. He said he waited every week so that he could read the next part.

His outburst caught me off guard. I could see how it happened that he almost always was the one to set up the serial. He no doubt had asked the foreman for the assignment, and it naturally pleased me that the book meant so much to him; I hadn't imagined that anyone could read for pleasure in the terrible lighting of that place. I watched him at the keyboard of his machine, thoroughly engrossed in the text he was putting into type, and it impressed me to see how oblivious he was of his surroundings here and to think that a book could do this to him.

I told Mr. Gillis about the incident the next time I saw him. He was having a meeting with the backers—that was why he was in the office that day—and when they finished with their business and were preparing to leave, I went up to him and told him about the typesetter, how much he liked *Walls of Fire*, and that he said it was the most wonderful story he had ever read. Mr. Gillis, always crisp and in command of himself, became unnerved before my eyes. He turned to the partners, calling to them to go on without him, and sat down at a desk. "Did he really say that?" Mr. Gillis said. "Sit down, Daniel. Let's take a moment. You say he said he waited each week to read the next installment. See if you can tell, from your conversation with him, what it was specifically that drew him."

THERE is the eternal drive for a new clime—for something more, a dream, an elixir. When I look back to that summer and my time at the *Chronicle*, I think of those yearnings. They come back to me. I think of the Borough Hall streets and the languor that settled over them; of Silberstein and his companions, or the ones he wanted for companions; of sunny days and hopes, of Barbellion frolicking in spite of everything, sparring with the Petticoat Lane peddlers:

"Parley-vous français, M'sieur?"
"Oui, oui," said I.
"Ah! la, you're one of us—oh. . . !"

The memories come back with a pang, poignant if sentimental. As you get old and run out of space, the yearnings in you dwindle and disappear altogether. There is no point in having them. The instinct is gone, and for this reason, I suppose, the old books, the two novels and the journal which I enjoyed and treasured when I encountered them in my youth, have become all the dearer to me and I have been led to write about them at length.

A FOOTNOTE: *Walls of Fire*, privately printed, with no listed publisher, was thought untraceable. What happened was that my son Thomas—knowing I was doing this piece and meaning to work up a small surprise or joke—set out in secret with a friend of his, the writer Robert Bell of New York City, to see if between them they could locate a copy of the novel. They did—the only copy believed to be in existence. It is in the New York 42nd Street Public Library, kept in a special room, under guard. It may be viewed (in a complex microfilm arrangement) but not touched. The volume is in dangerously fragile condition, the binding sprung, the leaves loose and pulled from the backing. From its description, it may very well be the copy I carried each week with me to the printers, and which was stolen.

But *Silberstein* is yet to be found.

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"Glasnost," the KGB, and the "Nation"

Joshua Muravchik

SERGEI GRIGORYANTS, who has spent ten of his forty-six years in Soviet prisons and labor camps, was among some 150 political prisoners released in 1987 by order of the Politburo, in the first dramatic demonstration of Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of openness or *glasnost*. Today, however, the threat of persecution again darkens Grigoryants's life, a threat brought on by his insistence on taking the promise of *glasnost* seriously and abetted by a slanderous article featured in the American weekly, the *Nation*.

Soon after his release, Grigoryants announced that he was launching a magazine which would operate without government control or censorship, but which—unlike previous clandestine dissident publications, known as *samizdat*—would appear openly and seek legal recognition. The obvious purpose was to test or stretch the bounds of the new "openness." To underline the point, Grigoryants named his new journal, *Glasnost*.

Glasnost quickly became a symbol and barometer of the new atmosphere. It is not so much a journal of opinion as of news, the kind of news rarely found in the official press: about protests and appeals, dissidents and refuseniks. One can also find in it occasional wry reports about the Soviet establishment.

The authorities have responded to *Glasnost* with some ambiguity, at one point even implying a willingness to consider granting it official recognition, at other times threatening and harassing Grigoryants and confiscating copies of the magazine.

Recently, things have taken a turn for the worse. Grigoryants reports that the magazine has "been forced to abandon [its] offices" because pressures were brought against the person who had provided it space. Some contributors have also had their phones disconnected. Others have been accosted on the street. Paruir Airikyan, an Armenian nationalist whose open letter to Gorbachev was published in *Glasnost*, has been arrested. And a strident assault against Grigoryants has been launched in the Soviet press.

It is both an irony and a disgrace that this campaign has made heavy use of an article by Kevin Coogan and Katrina Vanden Heuvel in the March 19, 1988 issue of the *Nation*. Titled "U.S. Funds for Soviet Dissidents," it focused on "a small New York-based foundation run by Russian émigrés" called the Center for Democracy, which publishes the English-language edition of Grigoryants's *Glasnost* with a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The article charged that the Center has also received U.S. government funds through the NED for "a program that more closely resembled intelligence-gathering than human-rights work." Calling the Center "a potential albatross," the authors warned that "it would be tragic if *Glasnost* was silenced as a result" of this association.

For all their ostensible solicitude, the authors seem to have given little thought to the consequences of their own words. Their article was heralded by a press release from the *Nation* marked "for simultaneous release in New York and Moscow." The intention, says Miss Vanden Heuvel, was to distribute copies not to the Soviet press but to American correspondents in the USSR, where she was traveling at the time of publication—and even this intention was never fulfilled. Nonetheless, within days of the article's appearance it was picked up in the Soviet weekly, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. In a piece called "Pawns in Someone Else's Game," that journal used the *Nation* story to portray Grigoryants as a tool of U.S. intelligence who "had been given the job of provoking the flareup" in Armenia by "his patrons" at the CIA. The New York correspondent of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, Iona Andronov, also reported that:

> A local journalist, Kevin Coogan, gave me a more detailed and authentic account of the secrets of the New York publishers of the pseudo-*Glasnost*. He had earlier excited my curiosity by giving the lowdown on the new anti-Soviet magazine and securing semi-secret information about it. Coogan's collaborator in this was Katrina Vanden Heuvel, who works on the liberal weekly *Nation*. Their joint article for the *Nation* is already in the galley-proof stage. But Coogan agreed to share his information with *Literaturnaya Gazeta*.

Coogan has acknowledged furnishing Andronov with advance copies of the galleys and discussing the story with him (though he later sent *Literaturnaya Gazeta* a letter-to-the-editor protesting that Andronov's article "misrepresents" their conversation). In any event, once having given Andronov the galleys, and realizing that he was likely to write about this story, the two *Nation* authors emended their own galleys to stress their concern for Grigoryants's well-being.

It is hardly surprising that the Soviet press seized on the *Nation* story. The accusation of links to Western intelligence is precisely what Soviet authorities are wont to level against their most troublesome dissidents. Anatoly Sharansky, for example, was sentenced in

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1978 for spying for the CIA—a spurious charge that according to the *Nation*'s star columnist, Alexander Cockburn, had more truth to it than the "self-censor[ed]" American press would admit. And the Soviet journalist Iona Andronov is precisely the man to write such a story. A flamboyant figure, Andronov was the leading Soviet propagator of the theme that the CIA rather than the KGB had been behind the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II. (It was in this connection, apparently, that Andronov first met Coogan, who was working on the same angle.) According to Herbert Romerstein, a former staff member of the House Intelligence Committee, Andronov has "a long history of KGB activity."

The accusations in Andronov's story went far beyond those in the *Nation*, but Soviet authorities also saw fit to republish the *Nation* piece itself—not once, but twice. The translation appeared both in the weekly *Za Rubezhom* ("Foreign Life") and in the party daily *Sovietskaya Rossiya*. In short, as a spokesman for the Center for Democracy noted wryly, the *Nation* article reached an audience of thousands here, millions there.

BUT was it accurate? Has the Center for Democracy been engaged in some kind of intelligence activity? The *Nation* reported that in March 1984, the exiled Soviet human-rights activist Yuri Yarim-Agaev "wrote a proposal for a new 'Soviet studies research center,' which later became the Center for Democracy. At the heart of the proposal, a copy of which InterNation obtained through FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] requests, was a bold idea: to use the Soviet human-rights network to gather political and military information on the USSR."

The *Nation*, however, misrepresented the March 1984 proposal in two crucial ways. First, the proposal did not involve "military information." A sentence from the proposal quoted in the *Nation* referred to the sorts of information shared among human-rights defenders within the USSR and then declared: "this network has not been concentrating on gathering military, technological, and strategic information, nor can it do so." To this the *Nation* added: "Yarim-Agaev proposed to rectify this." But Yarim-Agaev proposed nothing of the sort. Here are the relevant passages:

> . . . this network has not been concentrating on gathering military, technological, and strategic information, nor can it do so.
>
> However, the spectrum of [its] information has considerably broadened to include many social, economic, and political aspects of Soviet life. . . .
>
> To understand and predict the policy of the Soviet leadership it is indispensable to have access to reliable and detailed information on developments within the country, changes and adjustments in internal and external policies, and the attitudes of the many different nationalities, social strata, groupings, etc. in the USSR.

The proposal then went on to enumerate the eleven areas of research that Yarim-Agaev had in mind. None of the eleven involved military information, although one category was headed "the military and society." Needless to say, the *Nation* gave heavy emphasis to this category, and simply ignored the majority of the other research subjects. But even here, as was made crystal clear in Yarim-Agaev's proposal, the information to be gathered was of a sociological nature, and had nothing to do with deployments of forces.

To Soviet authorities, of course, almost any true information is sensitive. Thus, numerous refuseniks have been denied emigration because they have had access to economic or sociological data that the Kremlin regards as "state secrets." And, perversely, the Kremlin has a point. In a century of total war and of long-term ideological/power conflicts, all kinds of social facts may bear on the power of the state. In the West, nonetheless, we draw a line between information about, for example, the GNP, or the quality of our schools, on the one hand, and about the location of our submarines, on the other hand. Yarim-Agaev's proposal aimed only at the kind of information that is available about the United States in every issue of the New York *Times*. When the *Nation* used the terms "intelligence-gathering" and "military information" to describe the Agaev proposal, it was thus in effect employing totalitarian definitions.

THE *Nation* misused the proposal in a second and still more egregious way when it claimed that the contemplated research center "later became the Center for Democracy." This is simply false. Indeed, the proposal died within weeks of its birth, having been rejected by the staff of the National Endowment for Democracy, which did not even send it on for consideration by its board. The staff felt that research of this kind was already being done by competent academic institutions, and that the proposed activity, though perfectly legitimate, would be too vulnerable to attack by Soviet authorities.

Instead, the NED agreed to fund a small feasibility study conducted by Yarim-Agaev, Vladimir Bukovsky, and others. As a result of that study, the Center for Democracy was created in 1985 and began receiving support from the NED in 1986. In the two years since then, the Center has worked purely as a human-rights organization, channeling moral and material support to Soviet dissidents, serving as an authoritative source of information here about their plight, and publishing *Glasnost*. Although the findings of the feasibility study, the proposal for the Center for Democracy, and each of the Center's quarterly reports were supplied to the *Nation* in response to its FOIA request, not a word from any of them was cited in the article.

In response to the *Nation*'s attack, several recently arrived dissidents have spoken out in defense of the Center. The noted poet Irina Ratushinskaya and her husband, Igor Gerashchenko, wrote:

> [W]e can attest to the fact that the Center never turned to us for any intelligence information but helped us when we were in the Soviet Union—from sending vitamins for the women's labor camp to providing material support and information for many dissidents. . . . We know now that

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> one can always turn to the Center for information on prisoners of conscience . . . who is in which camp, who has been released, who has been arrested again, who is in internal exile, who in a psychiatric prison.

As this inventory of activities suggests, the Center takes an aggressive approach to its work. For example, for a year it ran an "independent exchange program" which actively directed Western travelers in the USSR to Soviet dissidents desiring more contact with outsiders. While the Center's supporters believe that such programs help to protect dissidents against persecution, some critics have complained that such "high-profile" activity, conducted with public funds, may actually increase their jeopardy.

THIS controversy provided additional grist for the *Nation*'s mill. The authors of the March 19 article quoted five authorities—the exiled Soviet dissidents Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Pavel Litvinov, the American Sovietologists Richard Pipes and Herbert Ellison, and an official of Helsinki Watch, Catherine Fitzpatrick—apparently criticizing the activities of the Center for Democracy. All have subsequently acknowledged that they were quoted accurately, but four of the five say their words were used by the *Nation* in a misleading way, and the fifth is deeply unhappy with the article.

When Katrina Vanden Heuvel was asked whether she believes that the Center for Democracy is engaged in intelligence-gathering, she replied coyly: "I refer you to the quotes in the article from a wide range of people." But only two of those quoted—Catherine Fitzpatrick and Herbert Ellison—mention intelligence. Although the article made it appear that they were talking about the Center, both say that this was not so. As Miss Fitzpatrick has explained:

> It seems to me there is no evidence—I don't think the *Nation* has come up with any evidence certainly (I think it's a misleading article in that sense)—that this group is involved in intelligence work. So far as I know about their current work, it's all about political prisoners and arrests and people in trouble. So I'm certainly not accusing them of engaging in intelligence work.

And Ellison says, "What bothers me very much about this article is that it equates the original proposal with the structure and function of the Center for Democracy. That is careless and inaccurate." Moreover, according to Ellison, "the notion that there was an effort to acquire information of military-intelligence significance [is] a very misleading interpretation of the language of the original proposal."

AS FOR the others: Pavel Litvinov, who was quoted as saying several very harsh things about the Center, has since explained that he was not talking about the Center at all but about the March 1984 research proposal. The same is true for Pipes, who likewise says that his critical comments referred only to the March 1984 proposal. That proposal, he believes, "was indeed ill-advised, but the *Nation*'s article does far greater harm to the cause of human rights in the Soviet Union by taking a rejected draft as a fact and blowing it up out of all proportion, thus providing the KGB with an excuse to harass *Glasnost* and Soviet dissidents with foreign contacts." In fact, the articles in the *Nation* and in the Soviet press themselves illustrate the very misuse to which Pipes had feared the March 1984 proposal would be susceptible.

And Ludmilla Alexeyeva, an avowed critic of the Center, has said that "if the authors [of the *Nation* article] are concerned about people there, then they shouldn't write this article," adding: "I think that the real aim of this article is some internal fight"—i.e., among American ideological factions—"that I don't understand and don't want to understand, and I feel that people here shouldn't use Soviet dissidents for these fights."

She is right. Kevin Coogan and Katrina Vanden Heuvel's intended target was not Grigoryants, but Yarim-Agaev and hs fellow leader of the Center for Democracy, Vladimir Bukovsky, and the NED's president Carl Gershman. All these are vilified in the *Nation* article for their "militant anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism" (to cite the words one anonymous source used of Gershman).

MISS VANDEN HEUVEL now argues that "the unfortunate official harassment of Grigoryants and the journal has been under way for some time . . . and I think it's wrongheaded or naive about the Soviet system to think that this article was required or played a part in anything that's going on there." But Herbert Ellison disagrees. "An article of the kind that the *Nation* has published," he says, "is a very useful club with which to beat Grigoryants."

Most tellingly of all, Grigoryants himself reports that Ellison's view is correct. "Our situation and my situation have considerably worsened," he asserts, and "in part this situation is a result of these articles" (i.e., the attacks on him in the Soviet press). Grigoryants plans to sue *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and its correspondent, Andronov, for slander in the Soviet courts. As for his self-proclaimed protectors, Kevin Coogan and Katrina Vanden Heuvel, their article, he says, "in point of fact has served the very clear slander of Iona Andronov."

Thus has the *Nation* progressed from its long and dishonorable history as an apologist for Soviet tyranny to the still bolder and more dishonorable role of accomplice.

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Did the U.S. Recruit Nazi War Criminals?

George Szamuely

THE "revisionist" interpretation of the origins of the cold war appears to be making a comeback. Only, this time around it is thinner, cruder, and meaner than before. Back in the 1960's, revisionists held that the Soviet Union had been driven to behave aggressively, and to establish Communist puppet regimes throughout Eastern Europe, in response to American belligerence—which, in turn, was prompted by the tendency of so-called late capitalism to seek worldwide economic domination. Revisionism gradually went out of fashion in the next decade when, following Communist outrages in Indochina, Africa, and elsewhere, it became less and less credible to identify a malevolent America as the source of the lingering East-West conflict. In the last few years, however, a steady trickle of authors are once more claiming to have found in the machinations of postwar American policy-makers the original sin that has blighted all U.S.-Soviet relations. But now, instead of the old Marxist bogeyman of late capitalism, a different culprit has appeared on the scene.

The story now recounted is that key figures in the U.S. government conspired to allow thousands of Nazi war criminals to escape justice after 1945. As if that were not bad enough, a substantial number of them, thanks to yet more duplicitous behavior by American officials, ended up living in the United States. Most seriously of all, these undesirable immigrants, not content to enjoy the obscurity that their refuge afforded them, put to use their long experience of fighting Communism by participating, with the connivance of various branches of the U.S. government, as front-line troops in the cold war.

None of these charges is especially new. They were a staple of Soviet propaganda throughout the 1950's—up until the time the Soviets realized that repeated references to Nazis allegedly ensconced in the chancelleries of the West were undermining their own efforts to win favors from the Federal Republic of Germany. But in the United States few, if any, paid much attention to these Soviet accusations until 1979 when the Department of Justice, under pressure from then-Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman and the House Immigration Subcommittee, set up the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) in order to expose and then seek to deport any Nazis hiding in our midst.

The revelation in August 1983 by the then director of the OSI, Allan A. Ryan, that Klaus Barbie had been employed by the U.S. Army Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC) just after World War II seemed to confirm that there really was no infamy to which the United States was not ready to sink. Yet in all that has been written about the Barbie case, the evidence has tended to point not to American mendacity but to considerable naiveté on the part of the officials involved. As for the charge that the Barbie case was part of a systematic pattern of making use of Nazi war criminals, this is a caricature of what really happened.

The vast majority of those who now stand accused of unpunished war crimes came from the Baltic countries or from Eastern Europe —in other words, from states that are today ruled by Moscow. The lurid imagery, loose language, and guilt-by-association reasoning employed by Ryan, Holtzman, and others has had the unfortunate effect of persuading the American public that there was, and is, something disreputable in the longing of these nations to rid themselves of the Communism imposed on them from without. Equally reprehensible is the notion, too often promoted by these investigations, that resistance to Soviet expansionism on the part of the United States itself could have no other origin than in a criminal conspiracy.

EVEN before the creation of the OSI, rumors were rife concerning the questionable political background of at least one group of people in the employ of the U.S. government: the German scientists working on the rocket and space programs. Decisive confirmation of their shady pasts seemed to come in October 1984, after most of the key figures—Wernher von Braun, Kurt Debus, Walter Dornberger—were already dead. The OSI announced that the lone survivor of the team, the seventy-seven-year-old former director of the Saturn V rocket project, Arthur Rudolph, had "participated in the persecution of forced laborers, including concentration-camp inmates"; Rudolph, the announcement disclosed, had "voluntarily" renounced his American citizenship and had already left the country.

All this is recounted in *The Paperclip Conspiracy: The Hunt for the Nazi Scientists*, by Tom Bower,* who has previously published two other accounts of America's dealings with Nazis after the war: *Pledge Betrayed* (1982) and *Klaus Barbie* (1984). His new book—a fair and competent reconstruction of a confusing series of events—raises three important questions. First, did U.S. officials knowingly connive in the obstruction of justice by bringing back Nazi war criminals who should instead have been facing trial in Europe? Second, were U.S. immigration laws, forbidding entry into this country to "enemy aliens" or to citizens of countries with which the United States was at war, knowingly vio-

GEORGE SZAMUELY *contributed "The Imperial Congress" to our September 1987 issue.*

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lated? And, third, how damaging to the United States would it have been *not* to recruit these scientists, but to have allowed them to be hired by the Russians, who were equally anxious to get hold of them?

News of the brilliant scientists working for Hitler had circulated in London and Washington throughout the war. Captured German equipment had confirmed the Allies' worst fears. "The barrel of the American 50-caliber machine gun," writes Bower, "eroded after eight hundred rounds, while German barrels lasted for five thousand. American bazookas and antitank guns were ineffective compared with the German hollow-charge heavy rockets and high-performance light antitank weapons." The Germans had been the first to develop the jet fighter; their long-range rocketry and radio-guidance systems were years ahead of anything being produced in Britain or the United States; their rockets were powered by liquid, not solid, fuel and were hence much lighter; they had pilotless aircraft, or flying bombs; their aircraft guns were fired by electricity; their infrared receivers could detect aircraft exhaust fumes from as far away as 16,000 yards; and they had developed a lethal nerve gas, Tabun.

THE looting of German military technology began during the war itself. By July 1944 the Russians had cleaned out the Blizna missile center. The French grabbed the aircraft factories and denied access to them to the British and the Americans. The British seized the submarine and torpedo plant at Kiel. The Russians extracted all the secrets they needed to build up their postwar submarine force from the torpedo research center at Gdynia, in Poland.

But the biggest prize of all fell to the Americans. Although the underground rocket factory at Nordhausen in the Harz mountains lay in the designated Soviet zone of occupation, it so happened that the first troops to get there belonged to the U.S. First Army. It was here that the V-2 rockets that had devastated London were manufactured. The conditions at Nordhausen were horrifying. Slave labor from the neighboring concentration camp, Dora, had been employed to dig the gigantic tunnels—according to Bower, without power drills or mechanical excavators. Twenty thousand prisoners were subsequently estimated to have died of exhaustion, starvation, disease, or at the hands of the SS guards in the realization of this extraordinary enterprise.

The scientists who had worked at designing the missiles built at Nordhausen—Wernher von Braun, Walter Dornberger, and others—were housed in laboratories on the island of Peenemünde. They cheerfully surrendered to the Americans; informed them that they had fourteen tons of documents full of research data stashed away; explained that they were scientists, not Nazis; and expressed their eagerness to take up employment with the Americans.

Much as U.S. military intelligence may have wanted to facilitate the captured scientists' desire to continue with their work, there were two obstacles to surmount. First, as a result of a Joint Chiefs of Staff directive issued in November 1944 (in furtherance of Henry Morgenthau's plan to pastoralize Germany), all scientific research-centers in the U.S. zone had been closed, and thousands of German scientists had been rendered unemployable. Second, there seemed no way around the problem that many of these scientists had been members of the Nazi party, some even of the SS, and were hence ineligible for admission to this country.

To the military, the danger was that the scientists might thus be lost to America, for neither the Russians nor the French were showing any qualms about hiring Nazis. Bower writes: "French agents were rumored to be arresting the wives of German experts and forcing them to blackmail their husbands into returning to the French zone." As for the Russians, they were going out of their way to offer high wages, comfortable villas, domestic staff, ample supplies of food, cigarettes, and clothing to all research scientists, civilian or military. The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) issued a grim warning: "Unless the migration of important German scientists and technicians into the Soviet zone is immediately stopped, we believe that the Soviet Union within a relatively short time may equal United States developments in the fields of atomic research and guided missiles. . . ."

It was not until March 4, 1946 that the U.S. government finally decided to act. The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee issued a policy statement sanctioning entry into the United States of outstanding scientists, provided that such entry was in the "national interest" and that none of them had been "active Nazis or otherwise objectionable." But even in the case of these, military intelligence circumvented the problem in a number of instances by offering short-term contracts without right of admission to families.

The scientists to be offered contracts were identified by paperclips attached to their files: thus was Project Paperclip born. The State Department, however, was still refusing to issue visas to Nazis, and so a new directive was issued on September 3, 1946 allowing for the entry of 1,000 scientists and refusing admission only to those in the "automatic arrest category through the denazification program of the U.S. government." Although the State Department still held back, hundreds of scientists started arriving, visas or no. According to the Army, when Project Paperclip came to an end on September 30, 1947, a total of 457 scientists had been brought over. (One must put this figure in context; out of an estimated 2,500 aeronautic experts in Germany in 1945, 25 percent went to work for the Soviet Union, and 8 percent went to France; 12 percent came to the United States.) In the summer of 1948 the State Department finally issued visas to the Paperclip scientists.

TO RETURN to the three questions posed above: Bower's book provides no evidence leading one to conclude that known war criminals were brought over to the United States. Most of the cases American officials had to deal with were similar to what had been encountered at Nordhausen. Wernher von Braun

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and his colleagues assured their interrogators that, of course, they knew conditions were terrible in the rocket factory, but what could they do? The SS, and not they, were responsible for organizing the murderous work schedule. Time and again during those years the British and the Americans were to come up against this line of reasoning from the "professionals" interested only in doing their jobs and in not asking too many questions about the consequences of their work or the origins of the tools at their disposal.

Although no war criminals were recruited, it nevertheless seems that as time went on the American military became less and less discriminating about who was coming over. Hubertus Strughold, who as director of Hitler's Air Ministry research institute had known about the human experiments conducted at Dachau and elsewhere, was brought to conduct research into space medicine. Kurt Blome, who had been acquitted at Nuremburg of conducting human experiments, was hired by the U.S. Chemical Corporation to perform research in biological warfare. Then there was Walter Schreiber, who had been head of the Department of Science and Health in the German High Command and was alleged to have witnessed human experiments. (Blome and Schreiber had to leave in the face of protest.)

WERE U.S. immigration laws violated? The answer is somewhat more ambiguous. To ensure that the Paperclip scientists obtained visas, U.S. military intelligence had to persuade the State Department that they were "nominal" and not "active" Nazis. Security reports compiled by the Joint Intelligence Objectives Agency (JIOA) tended to minimize the importance of such factors as membership in the SS or the SA. Nazi-party membership was invariably ascribed to opportunism and not to ideological conviction. In all this there undoubtedly occurred some distortion of the record, but no more than what was becoming a daily feature of life in occupied Germany, where the United States was finding it impossible not to deal with people who, to a greater or lesser degree, had been implicated in the crimes of the previous regime.

Finally, there can be do doubt that had the Paperclip scientists not been hired by the U.S. government, they would have gone to work for the Russians. As it is, the Soviets learned a great deal from the scientists who came to them voluntarily or by kidnap. As Bower trenchantly observes:

> The Korean war can be viewed, on the technical level, as a trial of strength between two different teams of Germans: those hired by America and those hired by the Soviet Union. The aerial dogfights between Soviet MiG-15s and American F-86 Sabres—both designed by German engineers—dispelled for many their doubts about the expediency of plundering Germany's scientific expertise.

EXPEDIENCY is not the same thing thing as wickedness. Anyone who prefers to think in terms of the latter will have a feast in Christopher Simpson's paranoid fantasy, *Blowback: The First Full Account of America's Recruitment of Nazis, and Its Disastrous Effect on Our Domestic and Foreign Policy.** The thesis of this nasty, rambling, hodgepodge of a book goes something like this: since 1945, East European émigré groups have wielded undue influence on American public life and foreign policy, especially in matters pertaining to the Soviet Union. The reason for their elevation to a position of influence is that during the years of "anti-Communist hysteria"—that is, from the end of World War II up to the present day—they have been subsidized and supported by the U.S. government—that is to say, by the CIA—as front-line troops in a campaign aimed at the "liberation" of Eastern Europe and the break-up of the USSR. By a not-so-curious coincidence, this was historically the same role they played during World War II when they joined the Nazi effort to overthrow Soviet Communism as collaborators, as auxiliaries, as murderers of partisans, as partners in war crimes, as informers, as quisling administrators.

There are, Simpson concedes, superficial differences. During the war, the rhetoric of the East European Nazi collaborators was rife with anti-Semitism and other racial references. After the war, those who survived and who became leaders of the émigré groups in the West learned to sugarcoat their talk of overthrowing Communism with expressions like "democracy" and "human rights." But under the skin, or so Simpson assures us, they were the same people, and the effect they had on the ensuing cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union was nothing short of pernicious.

IT WOULD be tedious to detail all the distortions, the instances of character assassination, the slander of entire nations, the hysterical use of techniques of guilt by association that disfigure almost every page of this book. Simpson's entire case against such obscure, long-forgotten organizations as the Committee for Free Latvia, or the Assembly of Captive European Nations, or the American Friends of the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations—as well as Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe—is that at one time or another individuals working for them had been Nazi collaborators. Simpson, who freely bandies about the word "collaborator," never clarifies what he means by it, although some hint of his intentions may be gathered by his invariable practice of adding to it the qualifier "anti-Communist." One is not being merely playful in remarking that one of the earliest and most diligent of Nazi collaborators was Stalin, who fulfilled every request the SS made of him, including the handing over of German Communists living in the Soviet Union, some of whom were Jews.

But such considerations are of no moment to Simpson. "Next to the Nazis' operation of the anti-Jewish extermination centers . . . the most terrible crimes of the entire war took place in the name of anti-Communism in the German-occupied territories on the Eastern Front," he writes. Joining the *Ein-*

* Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 398 pp., $19.95.

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satzgruppen in carrying out these crimes were local auxiliaries in Lithuainia, Latvia, the Ukraine, and elsewhere—the very forces from which would emerge the champions of the doctrine of "liberation" in the 1950's.

The case of the East European auxiliaries is frequently cited to underline the essential unworthiness of the nations comprising the USSR (thus also perhaps making Soviet rule seem enlightened). But the historical background is always absent. Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia had been invaded by Soviet Russia less than two years before the outbreak of the war; in the wake of the invasion, the people of these Baltic states were subjected to the same kind of violent, forced collectivization and Communization imposed on everyone else under Soviet rule in the previous decade. As for the people of the Ukraine, they had been the victims of Stalin's calculatedly genocidal policies.

Hard as it may be to imagine now, the Nazis were welcomed as liberators in many parts of the USSR. In return, the Germans suggested that the local populace help them out—specifically, in their war against the Jews. According to Raul Hilberg, one of the Nazis' purposes in involving locals was to forge "a defensive weapon with which to confront an accuser" in the future. Another was to prepare "an element of blackmail that could be used against the local population." In fact, any long-term *collaboration* with the Nazis, as distinct from complicity in their crimes, turned out to be impossible —not least because the Nazis could not countenance fighting alongside Slavs. Soon Ukrainian nationalists and others were fighting both Nazis and Soviets in about equal proportions.

ALLAN RYAN has estimated that there are around 10,000 Nazi war criminals in the United States, most of them Balts and Ukrainians. They got here as a result of the Displaced Persons Act of 1948; of the 400,000 allowed in under the Act, 40 percent were supposed to come from countries that had been annexed de facto by a foreign power (i.e., Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) and 30 percent were supposed to be farmers (which would tend to favor Ukrainians). That among them so many war criminals slipped in was due, says Ryan, to the impossibility of checking the backgrounds of all these people in the absence of a resource like the Berlin Document Center.

Simpson concurs in Ryan's estimate of the numbers, though he naturally believes that CIA conspiracy, rather than administrative oversight or bungling, was responsible, and along the way he presents a lot of accusations, some of Soviet origin, about those let in. Whether or not the correct figure is 10,000, the OSI acknowledges that since 1979 it has investigated 1,300 cases, of which 600 have remained open. In all, 19 people have been deported or pressured into leaving—not exactly a figure to inspire alarm.

But of course the real theme of Simpson's book is not who was or was not a war criminal, or how many entered the country. What he is desperate to establish is that the doctrine of "liberation," or "rollback," which helped the Republican party win the presidential election in 1952, is traceable to the "émigré propagandists who had worked for the Nazis on the Eastern Front" and who "by the late 1940's . . . had learned the rhetoric" of democracy. "Their adoption of lip service to democracy," he asserts, "began to provide former fascists with a platform to promote their agenda to millions of Americans."

Here, then, we come full circle. Once we have absorbed the lesson that the "true origins of liberationism as a coherent philosophy lie in Nazi Germany and in the Nazis' political warfare campaign on the Eastern Front, nowhere else," and that even such watered-down versions of the creed as today's Reagan Doctrine are only "updated liberationism," we are enabled to reach the proper conclusion: to be opposed to Soviet expansion and Communist tyranny—yesterday, today, or tomorrow—is to be a Nazi. Ideas like this make the revisionism of the 1960's seem positively benign.

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A Failed Musical Genius

Samuel Lipman

Alles ist nach seiner Art—everything goes after its own fashion; or, one's fate is to live up to whatever one is. Such is the sage if hardly practical wisdom dispensed by the god Wotan (disguised as the Wanderer) to the Nibelung Alberich in Act II of Richard Wagner's opera *Siegfried*. In the case of Nicolas Slonimsky, editor-in-chief of the standard *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, genius, or at least the possession of many talents, has gone together with a personal awareness of failed ambitions and only accidental success.

Slonimsky, now a hearty and healthy ninety-four years old, has just provided the grounds for this self-imposed verdict in a curiously disquieting volume of memoirs.[1] Why a sentence of failure should be passed on his long life, and should ultimately seem so apt, is at first glance unclear. Few mortals, after all, are blessed, as he is, with talents that win widespread recognition; fewer still are fortunate enough to reach Slonimsky's grand age and to do so, moreover, in good health, able to work vitally and gainfully at that which has occupied them their life long. But any appropriate sense of exultation is totally missing from this book, which on the contrary leaves the reader with a feeling of emptiness, as if life itself had turned out pointless.

The bare facts of Slonimsky's story are, or ought to be, fascinating enough. Born in St. Petersburg in 1894 to assimilated and highly intellectual Jewish parents, he was immediately acknowledged by all and sundry as a genius; indeed, the nickname of "Newtonchik," bestowed upon him even before birth, suggests just what prodigies he was expected to perform. In keeping with the then-regnant love of serious music and especially of the piano, Slonimsky was discovered in early childhood to have absolute pitch, the much-coveted ability to identify played or sung notes by name in themselves, rather than merely in relation to each other.[2] He also showed a precocious ability to memorize meaningless strings of numbers and calendar dates.

At the age of six Slonimsky was put to studying the piano with his aunt, Isabelle Vengerova, later to be famous as a faculty member (from 1924 to 1956) of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and as the teacher of, among others, Leonard Bernstein, Samuel Barber, Lukas Foss, Gary Graffman, and Jacob Lateiner. At fourteen he entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where his talent was recognized by the composer Alexander Glazunov. By the time of his graduation, though he disappointed his family by winning not the prestigious gold medal but only a silver, he was able to demonstrate his pianistic prowess by getting through the "Minute Waltz" of Chopin in 43 seconds (and by perfecting a party stunt in which he would play the upper part of Chopin's "Black Key" étude not with his fingers but with an orange rolled with his right hand).

Slonimsky's life, like that of so many millions in Russian society, was forever shattered by the coming of war and revolution. Drafted into the army, he spent his time playing the piano; with characteristically dismissive levity he remarks of his army service, "With conscripts like me, how could Germany fail to win. . . ?" When the war was succeeded by revolution, Slonimsky found his mood fired by the social upheaval, but he soon discovered that one cannot live by political ecstasy alone: when the revolution triumphs, for food and shelter one must look elsewhere. So, working always as a musician, he began a harrowing long march which took him, sometimes in the company of his family and sometimes alone, first to Kiev in the Ukraine, then to Yalta in the Crimea, and finally abroad to Constantinople, Paris, and in 1923 to the United States.

His first real break came in Paris, where he worked as a kind of rehearsal pianist for the fledgling conductor Serge Koussevitzky, then parlaying his own formidable musical instincts and his wife's fortune into the beginnings of an international celebrity career. As Slonimsky played piano reductions of the orchestral scores, Koussevitzky would practice his time-beating and cue-giving before an imaginary orchestra. Slonimsky also performed for Koussevitzky the duties of a musical secretary (in this capacity he found a way to rebar Stravinsky's highly syncopated *Rite of Spring* so that the rhythmically insecure Koussevitzky could conduct it without going through the score's frequent meter changes). Though working for Koussevitzky paid well—and the food was good—Slonimsky jumped at a generous offer to come to the United States, where in

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[1] *Perfect Pitch: A Life Story*, Oxford University Press, 263 pp., $21.95.

[2] For a touching account of the role played by music and the piano among educated and prosperous Jews in turn-of-the-century Russia, see *A Vanished Present*, the memoirs of Alexander Pasternak (the brother of the novelist). This book, published in English translation (by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) in 1984 but little noticed on its appearance, conveys both the atmosphere of home music-making and the high quality of local and visiting musical activity taken for granted at the time.

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the unlikely venue of Rochester, New York, the camera king George Eastman was starting an opera company at his own Eastman School of Music.

In Rochester, in addition to learning English, Slonimsky coached operas, played classical and romantic music (including well-paid trio concerts for Eastman's breakfasts), and even wrote a ballet score that sounded like Rimsky-Korsakov. More important for his future—or so he thought at the time—were his studies with Albert Coates, the brilliant English conductor then in residence in Rochester.

In 1925, Koussevitzky, who had been appointed the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, invited Slonimsky to return to his employ. Yet despite all the necessary services which Slonimsky was able to provide, the vain conductor could not abide the younger man's brash desire to be always in the right, or his penchant for appearing in the newspapers as a personality on his own. By 1927, Slonimsky was cut loose by Koussevitzky and forced to earn a living in Boston as a free-lance pianist and conductor.

For a while Slonimsky led a Harvard student orchestra called the Pierian Sodality. But more to his taste was conducting professional musicians in performances of new works. He became friendly with the reclusive—and at that time almost completely unknown—Charles Ives, and in 1931 gave the world premiere in New York of Ives's complex and dissonantal *Three Places in New England* (1903-14). In an example of the zany humor which has always marked Slonimsky's public behavior, the daring program he chose for this historic event in American music included, in addition to the Ives, Carl Ruggles's knotty and transcendentally serious *Men and Mountains* (1920-21) and closed with Mozart's *A Musical Joke*, a work that ends with a polytonal, defiantly wrong-note coda. The purpose of this bizarre juxtaposition was to show that, in Slonimsky's words, "Mozart did it too."[3]

Ives became quite fond of Slonimsky, and in 1931 sponsored orchestra concerts for him in Paris where he conducted works by such important modernist figures as the American Henry Cowell, the French-American Edgar Varèse, the Cuban Amadeo Roldán, and the Mexican Carlos Chávez (as well as Ives and Ruggles). The concerts were successful, or at least attention-getting, and the next year Ives sponsored a second Slonimsky tour in Europe. This time, in addition to two Paris concerts—which included solo appearances by Béla Bartók (in his First Piano Concerto) and Arthur Rubinstein (in Brahms's Second Piano Concerto)—Slonimsky conducted the Berlin Philharmonic, then at the height of its pre-Hitler glory. This concert was brilliantly received by a major part of the musical press, with the great musicologist and historian Alfred Einstein writing of Slonimsky in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, "This is a talent of the first rank."

On the strength of his European reception, Slonimsky was invited to conduct the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Here too he was successful—so successful that he was engaged to conduct the entire 1933 season of summer concerts at the Hollywood Bowl, outdoor events attracting, then as now, a broad and large public. At the Bowl, Slonimsky persevered in programming new music, including Varèse's percussion spectacular *Ionisation*, an overture by the then very young American Roy Harris, and Arnold Schoenberg's recently written and hermitic *Accompaniment-music for a Film Scene*. The outcry was so great that the Bowl's influential patrons—Slonimsky calls them "moneyed dowagers"—forced his removal before the season's end. Though Slonimsky now looks back with pride on his programs of *outré* music, the California fiasco effectively put an end to his entire conducting career.

Meanwhile, Slonimsky had married a young art critic for the *Christian Science Monitor* and became a father. To his young daughter's musical education he characteristically applied the same strong will he had shown in programming concerts. Using Pavlovian methods, he attempted to get her to appreciate dissonantal music by playing Chopin while refusing to feed her when she was hungry and then, immediately after, playing Schoenberg while she was being fed.

Unable otherwise to support his family, Slonimsky increasingly relied on writing as a means of earning at least the semblance of a living. In 1937, he published *Music Since 1900*, a long, detailed, day-by-day record of important—or merely recondite—happenings in musical life. Now in a fourth edition updated to the end of 1969, and supplemented by a separate volume providing corrections and bringing the story up to the middle of 1985,[4] this immense undertaking combines serious recounting of compositions and performances with descriptions at once acid and elfin. My own favorite item, sublimely prefiguring the current academicization of music, is the following entry for May 25, 1955, quoted in its entirety:

> *The Committee*, comic opera in four scenes by the thirty-three-year-old American composer Matt Doran, detailing an examination for a Music Doctor's degree in a Western American university, with a multiplicity of academically inane questions, including one asking which symphony begins with a tympani beat on the dominant (the correct answer is the first symphony by the chairman of the committee), is produced for the first time at the Del Mar College of Music in Corpus Christi, Texas.

In 1941, in line with his dedication to fact-gathering, Slonimsky went to Central and South America to collect orchestral manuscripts for the Fleisher Collection of the

[3] Documentation exists of Slonimsky's conducting at this time of part of the Ruggles work as well as of music by Ives and Edgar Varèse. Recordings of this music, on 78 RPMs, made for New Music Quarterly Records (Ruggles and Ives) and Columbia (Varèse) in the mid-1930's, were reissued in 1972 on an Orion LP (ORD7150). The performances of the Ives and the Ruggles are attractively intense, possessing the strong flavor of a time when new music was played with a hard unsentimental edge, rather than with the schmaltzy and tremulous vibrato now so much in fashion.

[4] Scribners, 1970 and 1986.

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Free Library of Philadelphia. The published result of his "Pan-American Fishing Trip," as he called it, was *Music of Latin America* (1945), a country-by-country description of a rich tradition and, at the time, a vibrant present; his book remains a standard source to this day, not just for the quality of its research but also for the hope it preserves in our media-ridden time of connecting unexploited folkloric material with serious music.[5]

RATHER less praiseworthy throughout the 1940's was Slonimsky's naive political orientation. At the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917 he had been (as we have seen) much elated—but not, it seems, for reasons of the supposed general betterment. Rather, as he is quoted in a patronizing 1986 *New Yorker* profile by Lawrence Weschler, "I was *saved* by the Revolution. Without the Revolution, I would have become obsessed with my vanity . . . [i]t forced me out into the world." This absurd fancy remained with him even during the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact. Still later, when Stalin's cruelty was at its height, Slonimsky spoke in 1948 at a meeting of the Committee for Soviet-American Friendship—a meeting that took place, in Slonimsky's own words, "shortly after the promulgation of the infamous resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR . . . which damned Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and others for composing music disliked by party members." For these and other stupidities, Slonimsky was visited by the FBI; nothing came of their questioning.

During the war years, and for some time thereafter, he devoted a great deal of effort to constructing a harmonic system based not on the diatonic scale so familiar in Western music but rather on new chromatic scales developed from the tritone, the interval of an augmented fourth frowned upon in the orthodox teaching of counterpoint. The result of his theoretical labors, comparable perhaps to Schoenberg's construction of the twelve-tone system (though without the goad of hyper-emotional musical expression which inspired Schoenberg), was published in 1947 in the *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*. Although Schoenberg was less than overwhelmed by it, the book seems to have found some interest among jazz players looking for new patterns on which to found their improvisations.

A rather less laborious example of Slonimsky's energy and intelligence is *The Lexicon of Musical Invective* (1952, currently in print in paperback). This entertaining collection of critics' misjudgments of great composers has provided much harmless satisfaction to creators and critics alike, while also, not quite so harmlessly, contributing to the contemporary myth of the avant-garde as a force always persecuted in this world and always victorious in the next.

But the major work of Slonimsky's life, the editing of *Baker's Dictionary*, was still to come. His lexicographical labors had begun in 1939, when he became a contributor to and associate editor of the first edition of Oscar Thompson's *International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians*; upon Thompson's death in 1946, Slonimsky became editor-in-chief of its subsequent editions. In performing this demanding work, he quickly found out a nasty truth of lexicography: since new compilations of words and facts are to a large extent based upon old ones, both truth and falsehood tend to be equally perpetuated. This insight prepared him well for his work on Eric Blom's fifth edition of the massive *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1954).

IN 1958 Slonimsky produced the fifth, completely revised, edition of the venerable *Baker's Dictionary*, a much-used compendium which had first appeared in 1900; under his direction, a sixth, expanded, edition followed in 1978, and a seventh, again expanded, was published in 1984. In these successive editions, Slonimsky, aided by numerous helpers, has increasingly indulged his ambition for achieving "comprehensiveness, biographical ubiquity, and, above all, infallibility."

There can be no denying that in *Baker's* Slonimsky has indeed achieved a maximum of accurate information in a relatively compact format, even if his goal of infallibility, as he himself is well aware, cannot be reached.[6] As for comprehensiveness, not surprisingly *Baker's* is less complete in its listing of compositions—one of the major functions of a musical dictionary—than the vastly larger and doubtless very much better-financed new (1980) *Grove's*.

But surely more important than absolute accuracy and total inclusion is the delightful freedom—and often humor—with which Slonimsky evaluates composers and performers in the process of describing their lives and works. Thus, of the cerebral American serialist Milton Babbitt, he writes:

> Babbitt's scientific-sounding theories have profoundly influenced the musical thinking of young American composers; a considerable literature, both intelligible and unintelligible, arose in special publications to penetrate and, if at all possible, to illuminate Babbitt's mind-boggling-speculations.

In a more positive vein, he writes of the French composer Francis Poulenc:

> A master of artificial simplicity, he pleases even sophisticated listeners by his bland triadic tonalities, spiced with quickly passing diaphanous discords.

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[5] Happily, the second side of the Orion LP mentioned in footnote 3, above, contains valuable material (albeit not orchestral) gathered by Slonimsky on his trip: several short, attractive South American vocal and instrumental works, recorded by Columbia in 1941 with Slonimsky at the piano.

[6] The problem of the carry-over of error, of which Slonimsky became aware when he first went to work for Oscar Thompson, has from time to time dogged his own work in *Baker's* as well. Thus from the fifth edition to the current seventh, he has the famous Russian piano teacher Rosina Lhévinne graduating from the Kiev Conservatory; she actually graduated, with the coveted gold medal, from the much more prestigious Moscow Conservatory. In another piano-related error, the current *Baker's* (1984) has the great piano manufacturer Steinway and Sons still under the control of the Steinway family; in fact the firm was sold to CBS in 1972, and ceased to be under even pro-forma family direction in the late 1970's.

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Along with his dictionary work, Slonimsky has made fitful attempts to come before the public, if not in his old way as a serious performer, then at least as a personality. In the 1950's, for example, he appeared successfully on the television quiz program *The Big Surprise*, a descendant of the rather more famous *$64,000 Question*. In 1981, he received a call from the rock star Frank Zappa, an admirer of Slonimsky's scale-book and of Edgar Varèse. When Zappa subsequently heard the by now eighty-seven-year-old man play (on the piano) the coronation scene from Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, he invited him to perform the feat, accompanied by Zappa and his band, at an upcoming concert. Slonimsky cannot conceal his delight in the experience:

> With demoniac energy Zappa launched us into my piece. To my surprise I sensed a growing consanguinity with my youthful audience as I played. My fortissimo ending brought out screams and whistles the like of which I had never imagined possible. Dancing Zappa, wild audience, and befuddled me—I felt like an intruder in a mad scene from *Alice in Wonderland*. I had entered my Age of Absurdity.

THIS, then, is Slonimsky's life: by turns glorious and self-deluded. Throughout his often compelling memoirs there lurks, as I noted at the outset, an air of disappointment and failure. At the book's conclusion, he presents a balance sheet of nearly a century of activity in pursuit of four ambitions: to be a "*Wunderkind* of the piano and outshine all other *Wunderkinder*," to be a composer, to be a great conductor, and to excel in the making of music dictionaries. Concerning the first three ambitions he professes total failure, and indeed this verdict, though here stated much too harshly, is not underserved. Of the last, in which he has been a great success, he writes:

> Actually, I blundered into it by accident. If there was any passion in it at all, it was rooted in my infantile lust to prove that I was the smartest of them all. I almost succeeded.

To explain his failure to achieve his more grandiose ambitions Slonimsky resorts to one of the out-of-the-way words of which he is inordinately fond: pigritude—"a nice archaic word from Latin *pigritia*, meaning sloth." It is a charge that seems hard to support, for if anything, he has shown superhuman energy throughout his life. By any usual criteria, he has labored constantly, and labored well; furthermore, his labors have been recognized, if not in the way he had initially planned.

And yet the reader, contemplating Slonimsky's many and durable achievements, also finds it difficult *not* to agree with the writer's own sense of a general failure. Perhaps a clue to the reason may be found in the phrase Slonimsky uses to describe his attachment—or lack thereof— to lexicography: "If there was any passion in it at all. . . ." This strangely distanced judgment on his central activity for the last fifty years accords well with his response when asked by Lawrence Weschler why he had not taken composing more seriously:

> "What for?" he countered. "What am I going to do, eat the reviews?"
>
> Didn't he have music welling up inside him, crying out for expression?
>
> "No," he replied. "I don't believe in that sort of thing. Sometimes, admittedly, it can get bothersome—I'm composing away in my head. If I let myself go, it would get to be like a vision, an aural vision—I have to watch it. But I feel no need to write out these symphonies. I know too many geniuses who composed masterpieces and become mental basket cases worrying about how they weren't being recognized. I don't have this problem."

But the "problem" to which Slonimsky refers is, in fact, not the fear of going unrecognized but rather what can only be called a lack of musical passion—that passion which can more objectively be called commitment. This lack shows itself in many ways. As a composer and theoretician he has seemed unwilling to treat musical language as anything but factitious; brought up, as he writes, on a "musical grammar and syntax ingrained in my psycho-musical makeup," he came to believe that "there were other possible musical languages, some natural though alien, and some artificial though plausible." To this unwillingness to consider one "mode of melodic and harmonic expression" any more "natural" or "plausible" than any other is joined his seeming lack of real interest as a performer in any but shocking repertory. Even today, in discussing (in the *New Yorker* profile) his nephew, the Soviet avant-garde composer Sergei Slonimsky, in whom he plainly takes great pride, he can manage nothing more than that his "work is every bit as far out as the most outrageous stuff we've been able to produce here in the West." However great a tribute Slonimsky may feel this to be, there can be little doubt that only on the rarest of occasions can the pursuit of outrage become the stuff of artistic immortality.

SLONIMSKY is surely not the only richly talented 20th-century musician to substitute will and energy for passion and commitment. Almost everywhere we look in contemporary composition—and this has been the sad fact at least since World War II—both style and content are perceived as matters of choice, as if artistic creation were no more than a matter of selecting a meal in a cafeteria, and the temple of harmony had given way to the Tower of Babel. Composers, serialist or aleatoric in the recent past and minimalist in the present, talk incessantly of solving problems on the cutting edge, of finding ways of expression validated only by their up-to-dateness. Musicians everywhere chase after popular success and at the same time scoff at the possibility of a sympathetic, sophisticated audience. Meanwhile, the young fail to build upon their promise, and the middle-aged veer aimlessly from style to style, from language to language, and from influence to influence. Viewed against the musical panorama of the century in which he has lived, Nicolas Slonimsky's self-confessed failure is both tragic and all too emblematic.

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Arabs As Jews

THE YELLOW WIND. By DAVID GROSSMAN. Translated by HAIM WATZMAN. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 216 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by EDWARD ALEXANDER

The Yellow Wind is David Grossman's account, written for the Israeli weekly *Koteret Rashit*, of his "seven-week journey through the West Bank" in 1987. It was undertaken in order to understand "how an entire nation like mine, an enlightened nation by all accounts, is able to train itself to live as a conqueror without making its own life wretched." Among the eighteen chapters, unequal in length and not logically parallel, are accounts of the Deheisha refugee camp, of a professorial study of the dreams of Arab and Jewish children, of the Jewish settlement at Ofra, of Bethlehem University, of a village to which refugees were allowed to return in 1972, of proceedings in the Nablus military court, of a village divided in 1949 by the newly drawn Israel-Jordan border, of travelers crossing the Allenby Bridge, of illegally employed Arab laborers in Holon (near Tel Aviv), and of settlers' reactions (and Arab lack of reactions) to the burning of the Moses family from the settlement of Alfei Menashe. There are also interviews with Moni Ben-Ari, a nonreligious leader of the Jewish settlement movement, with Raj'a Shehade, an Arab lawyer and author, and with the father of an Arab who took part in the murder of two Jewish couples. One chapter is a fictional inside view of an Israeli intelligence officer in the civil administration; it serves as a reminder (just in case the rest of the book should fail to do so) that Grossman is not merely a journalist but a novelist of solid achievement and high reputation.

George Eliot once said that, since opinions are a poor cement between human souls, the novelist's task should be the creation and diffusion of imaginative sympathy among those who differ from each other in everything except their shared suffering and their human status. Grossman too eschews opinions and aspires "to display wide-hearted humanism," but he does so by means of an inversion that directs all sympathy to one party while turning the other into a metaphor. Grossman leaps across the divide between Jews and Arabs by making his Arabs into Jews.

In Deheisha, impressed by the insistence of Arab children that their homes are in Jaffa, Lod, and other Israeli towns that neither they nor their parents have ever seen, Grossman thinks of the lyrically expressed longings of the medieval Spanish-Hebrew poet Judah Halevi, for the sweetest land he had never seen. He listens to an Arab grandmother singing the praises of her original village, and "discovers that she reminds me of my grandmother, and her stories about Poland." He sees a boy on the roof of a Deheisha house playing on a comb wrapped in paper as "fiddler on the roof." He tells of an Israeli friend who has devoted himself to studying the material culture of the Arabs in the area because "they remind him entirely of his forefathers." What may at first appear to be an act of imaginative identification soon becomes cloying and eventually, especially when Grossman's fictional Israeli, Gidi, sees in an Arab notable "something which reminded him of his father," reveals itself, after all, as ideology, in all its formulaic staleness, triteness, and falsehood.

Grossman maintains that the Palestinians "are making use of the ancient Jewish strategy of exile, and have removed themselves from history. They close their eyes against harsh reality, and . . . fabricate their Promised Land." Like the Jews in exile, they are "not willing to compromise" or to "try to improve [their] lives." Where, in this licentious equation between Palestinian Arabs and Diaspora Jews (by no means original with Grossman), is the Jews' belief that they were exiled because of their *own* sins? Where, in this desperate attempt to decorate the Arabs with the tattered coattails of Jewish suffering, is the equivalent of the Jews' enrichment of their life in exile by the elaborate pretense that they were already living in the Holy Land? Where, among the Arabs of Deheisha and Balata, is the equivalent of the Torah that sustained the Jews in exile—unless it be what Grossman refers to as "the oral law" of hatred now passed from Arab mouth to Arab ear in the absence of anti-Semitic textbooks confiscated by Israeli soldiers?

When Grossman—who was born in 1954—claims that Arab children who chant, "By throwing stones and burning tires we will free the motherland," remind him of Jewish children "who sang patriotic songs when British soldiers passed by," he does not merely mock memory and history, he comes perilously close to those Israelis (like the fifteen who signed up for passage on the PLO ship intended "to echo the voyage of the *Exodus*") who can discover their Jewish identity only by pretending to be Arabs who are themselves pretending to be Jews. When Grossman walks down the Ben Yehuda mall in Jerusalem, he succumbs to the illusion that he sees behind every Jew "a sort of double peeking out . . . his double from Nablus."

Thomas Macaulay, that lover of paradox, insisted that if Boswell had not been such a toady and sycophant, he could not have written so great a book as *The Life of Johnson*. To Dr. Johnson, famously contemptuous of Scotsmen for just those qualities, Boswell pleaded that he could not *help* being a Scotsman. To which Johnson re-

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plied: "That, sir, is what a great many of your countrymen cannot help." In the course of this eloquent and comparatively honest book, I found myself thinking often of that famous exchange. Grossman is a model of self-effacement as he listens submissively to Arabs who tell him that "the Jordanians took only our national identity from us, and you took everything," or expound on "Israeli rudeness, cynicism, idiocy, and arrogance," or regale him with the tale of the yellow wind that comes hot from hell to seek out "those who have performed cruel and unjust deeds" —by which they mean his Israeli countrymen—and "*exterminate* them, one by one" (emphasis added). Raj'a Shehade tells Grossman that although the Arab world is one of oppression, he is confident that the emergent Palestinian nation can be entirely free of the faults of Israel because he has seen that such great nations as England, America, and France are proud and nationalistic without oppressing their minorities. To such arrant nonsense, the author, a graduate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, cannot find the means to reply.

Susceptibility to balderdash disappears, however, and self-effacement turns to strident self-assertion when Grossman finds himself among the Jews. Among the Arabs, even when he sees children receiving "education in blind hatred," he tries "to be neutral. To understand. Not to judge." He entered Deheisha as if returning to the land of his ancestors. But he comes to the Jewish settlement of Ofra fully armed with suspicion, hostility, and partisanship, a "wary stranger" among people who remind him neither of his grandmother nor of anything human, especially when they are "in the season of their messianic heat." (Later in the book, Grossman makes much ado about an Israeli child's reference to an Arab cleaning woman bent over a pail as "a little bit a person, a little bit a dog.") In Ofra, Grossman does not want "to let down his guard" or be "seduced" by the Sabbath "warmth" and "festivity" of these wily Jews.

Whereas most of Grossman's remarks to Arabs in conversations recounted in the book are the perfunctory gestures of a straight man to whom his interlocutors pay no serious attention, he angrily complains that the Jewish settlers do not listen to or "display a real interest" in him. He asks them to "imagine themselves in their Arab neighbors' places," and is very much the angry schoolmaster when they decline to dance to his tune or accept his pretense that such an act of sympathetic imagination is devoid of political meaning. Neither are the settlers, despite their experience in creating a "well oiled publicity machine" (a rich joke, this), nimble enough to make the appropriate reply: "All right, we will imagine ourselves as Arabs if you will imagine yourself as a Jew." But Grossman has no intention of suspending his own rhythms of existence long enough to penetrate the inner life of these alien people: "What have I to do with them?" Although in the publicity for this book Grossman has been likened to the great modern Hebrew novelist S.Y. Agnon, one would do better to compare this chapter with its analogue called "Judea" in Philip Roth's *The Counterlife* to see the real meaning of imaginative sympathy in a novelist.

Grossman's resentment of the Jewish settlers is at least as much "cultural" as it is political. In Deheisha he had been much taken with the elderly Arab woman who told him: "We are people of culture! . . . You can't understand this culture. It's not a culture of television!" But in Ofra he complains that the settlers have "little use for culture," speak bad Hebrew, indulge in "old Diaspora type" humor, and own no books, "with the exception of religious texts." And these, far from mitigating the barbarity of their owners, aggravate it. The final image of the Jews in this long chapter is of "potential terrorists now rocking over their books."

The succeeding chapter also treats of culture and books, including religious ones. Grossman has come to Bethlehem University, one of several universities in the territories that have been punningly described as branches of PLO State. Here Grossman, though he acknowledges the school to be "a stronghold of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine," sees no terrorists rocking over books, but rather idyllic scenes that remind him of "the pictures of Plato's school in Athens." Bubbling with affection, eager to ascribe only the highest motives, Grossman is now willing to forgive even readers of religious books. He has not so much as a snort or a sneer for the Bethlehem English professor who ascribes Arabs' supreme sensitivity to lyric rhythm in English poetry to the "rhythm of the Koran flow[ing] through their blood." The author's ability to spot racism at a distance of twenty miles when he is among Jews disappears when timeless racial categories are invoked in Bethlehem.

The Yellow Wind is by no means lacking in harsh criticisms of Arabs; but these are almost always made by other Arabs. A schoolteacher is "against Arafat, because Arafat wants peace." A mukhtar from the Israeli side of the divided village of Barta'a recalls the self-abasement required of Palestinian Arabs by Jordanian soldiers. A resident of the Jordanian side of the same village excoriates Israeli Arabs for lack of honor, taking everything from their country and giving nothing in return: "While you do reserve duty forty-five days a year," he tells Grossman, "they go to the beach." One Arab moderate, a businessman educated at Hebrew University, seconds the view of another Arab that if the Israelis were to leave the territories there would be a "second Beirut." This man speculates compellingly on the likely consequences of Israeli withdrawal: "There will be a great slaughter. . . . First they will kill whoever had any connection with Israel, and those who did business with Israel. . . . And after they kill half of the population here, they will begin killing each other in a struggle for power."

Grossman himself remains aloof from such vulgar imaginings of the years to follow the realization of "peace now," though it seems clear that a "second Beirut" in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv would be a catastrophe

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for Israel infinitely greater than the original Lebanese version, a very hot yellow wind indeed. Despite the obvious political implications of what he writes about the Israelis and those Arabs who make themselves "a partner in my crime," Grossman does not wish to appear to assign his own, explicitly political meaning to the people and events he describes. Therefore he talks with no politicians, Jewish or Arab, and claims that "it is not a question of who is right," but strictly of "facts and numbers." As it happens, many of the "facts" that he does not get from personal observation come from sources that are profoundly entangled in politics. (On three separate occasions he reports that he "checked the facts with Dr. Meron Benvenisti," confidently withdrawing from the latter's "data bank" some of the most debased currency in Israel.) Yet there is also much evidence that Grossman really is as innocent of politics as he claims to be.

It is characteristic of *The Yellow Wind* to remove facts from their history in such a way as to suggest the author is either massively ignorant of politics or fiendishly mischievous. After describing the terrible conditions of the Deheisha camp he casually remarks that "It doesn't matter at all who is really guilty of the refugee camps. . . ." For Grossman to have explained how and why the Arab nations are responsible for the existence of the camps might have been boring work for a novelist, and might have made the book less palatable to the *New Yorker*, which published excerpts from it after the riots began in December; but it would have been appropriate for someone who professes to believe that "to become human" is to pass "from speech to moral action." Grossman is guilty of similar irresponsibility when he declares that "the hard kernel of the entire conflict" is "two nations which still don't recognize each other's legitimacy." But the UN plan of 1947 envisaged a Jewish state and an Arab state in western Palestine; the Jews recognized the Arab state, but the Arabs did not recognize the Jewish state—or, for that matter, the Arab state (any more than they had done in 1937, when the Peel Plan would have given the Arabs all of Palestine except for the coastal plain between Tel Aviv and Haifa). Whatever the reasons for which the Arabs started the war on November 30, 1947, Israel's refusal to recognize Palestinian Arab sovereignty was not one of them. Granted, it is a tedious business to keep repeating these things, almost as pedestrian a task, especially for a novelist, as locating the Jordan River in the same place every time you draw a map.

The Yellow Wind concludes with two chapters ostensibly about the murders of Jews, members of a family named Moses whose car was firebombed near the settlement of Alfei Menashe and two couples killed by a gang of Arab terrorists. These terrible stories afford Grossman an opportunity to display his wide-

US POLICY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

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A Look at the Facts

Robert F. Turner

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ranging "humanism" and generous inability to curb his benevolence. But the benevolence is directed toward the father of the captured terrorist because his house has been destroyed, and the anger reserved for Gush Emunim activists accused of exploiting the sorrow of the Moses family and friends. And what of the families of the victims? Grossman says that he cannot begin to measure their sorrow. Yet he also cannot resist the itch to speculate darkly about these people whom he has not bothered to meet: "I do not know if the families of the victims find any comfort in fostering hatred of the murderer, his family, his nation. How can we judge them if that is how they feel?" How generous, to forgive these people for sins they have yet to commit! There is such a thing as a heart too full for weeping, a silence more eloquent than speech; but David Grossman cannot, in *The Yellow Wind*, demonstrate these qualities of the sympathetic imagination when he is dealing with Jews.

Street-Corner Conservative

RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING. By PATRICK J. BUCHANAN. *Little, Brown. 392 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID BROCK

THESE memoirs by Patrick J. Buchanan—the pertinacious political commentator, syndicated columnist, and former resident controversialist in the administrations of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan—are a near-approximation in the pantheon of conservative political manifestoes to Barry Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative*. As such, they tell us much about the future trajectory on which Buchanan would like to take the conservative movement if the Republicans hold onto the White House in November, and especially if they do not. Paraphrasing the Abbé Sieyès during the French Revolution, Buchanan writes: "Now is the time to get more, after which we will demand and get everything. That is the correct mindset for our conservative counterrevolution." It is also a mindset that betrays a go-for-broke absolutism which many readers who consider themselves conservative may find discomfiting, perhaps even chilling.

Unlike most autobiographies, the title of this one captures precisely and entirely what Buchanan has to say about the genesis of his moral and political views. The first half of the book is a great bath in nostalgia, from Buchanan's birth in Washington, D.C. in 1938 through his undergraduate years at Georgetown University. Though he would later become well-known for his vitriolic assaults on the "Eastern Establishment," Buchanan was raised, and has never really left, one of its main citadels; but his was a "sleepy and segregated Southern city," not the "cosmopolitan capital" of today.

Raised in a devout Catholic household along with eight siblings, Buchanan imbibed his "street-corner conservatism" from people "whose heroes were Douglas MacArthur, Gen. Franco, and Sen. Joseph McCarthy." Along with many conservatives, Buchanan sees the early 50's as an idyll, before the decadence and nihilism of the counterculture undermined traditional notions of faith, family, and country. It was a time, he writes, "when you didn't need a presidential commission to tell you what pornography was," before "high heels were considered sexist and bad for the calves," and when Buchanan could have the high-school nickname "gay blade" without raising eyebrows. Unfortunately Buchanan's Norman Rockwell-like depiction, while welcome as an attempt to correct the popular caricature of the 1950's as a time of national hysteria fed by right-wing paranoia, is itself overwrought and devoid of nuance.

A definitive influence on the young Buchanan was his father William, a successful accountant and Al Smith Democrat who, along with millions of conservative Catholics, became disillusioned with FDR in the mid-1930's and switched to the GOP shortly thereafter. Every night, William made his sons hit a punching bag: 100 lefts, 100 rights, 100 one-twos. The lesson—always be ready for a fight—was to stand Buchanan in good stead in the future, as his penchant for "exposing and attacking," which he attributes to an inborn Scotch-Irish "irascibility," became apparent. During his freshman year at the Jesuit Gonzaga High School, he argued in debate in favor of a U.S. withdrawal from the United Nations and in defense of McCarthy. Running for the presidency of a student organization at Georgetown, he caused a campus-wide sensation by assailing his opponent as a "faculty fanny-kisser" and a "poodle" (he lost the race nonetheless). In 1958, he and his friends were picked up by the D.C. police for transgressing the grounds of the Soviet embassy in Washington to protest Khrushchev-sanctioned mob attacks on the U.S. embassy in Moscow.

ALTHOUGH there are few examples in these memoirs of the tightly wound prose and searing wit Buchanan's readers have come to expect in his syndicated columns and other writings, a delightful exception is his discussion of his year at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. Fifty years ago, Buchanan writes, most newsmen were "high-school dropouts, tough men from working-class families who respected local values of neighborhood, home, and church," but at Columbia in the 1960's he encountered the new-style journalist, "a mournful missionary, sent out to a certain martyrdom, to save the world." Adopting the brawling manner of the old New York *Daily News* to "carve up JFK for his plan to ransom the Cuban patriots he had left stranded at the Bay of Pigs," Buchanan horrified his professor in an editorial-writing class. Expectedly, the budding journalist got A's in financial reporting and libel law but a C for "basic issues in the news."

Buchanan's experience at Columbia was an important source for his later critique of the media, put forth forcefully in the 1970's when he worked in the Nixon White House and wrote his two previous books, *The New Majority* and *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*. As Buchanan was to see it then, the "media moguls" were the most in-

DAVID BROCK *writes about politics for* Insight *magazine.*

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fluential members of a new privileged liberal elite, a shadow government that had conspired to flout Nixon's "silent majority" of middle-class Americans who believed in traditional values. But all that was still to come. Back in the 1960's, after a disastrous job interview with the Washington *Post* in which he criticized the paper's coverage of Nixon, Buchanan landed work at the now-defunct St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, where, like other promising conservative-leaning journalists, he soon found himself assigned to the paper's bedrock Republican editorial page. (One cannot help wondering what would have been the result if Buchanan had ended up, as did so many of his Columbia colleagues, as a New York *Times* editor or CBS News producer.)

By 1964, Buchanan had become smitten with the Goldwater effort to wrest control of the Republican party from the wing led by Nelson Rockefeller, those whose main concern was "getting in 18 holes before martini time." In the Goldwater campaign is to be found the nascent emphasis, advanced by Buchanan then and still now, on ideological clarity, on a vigorously anti-Communist foreign policy, and on sociocultural issues (as opposed to economic ones) that pit intellectuals, professional politicians, government bureaucrats, and Wall Street against the rest of the country. Dismayed with the *Globe-Democrat*'s failure to endorse Goldwater in the fall campaign, and rejected by the Nieman Fellowship board at Harvard, Buchanan sought out Richard Nixon, his choice for the 1968 GOP nomination, and persuaded Nixon to hire him as an assistant in his New York law office.

The decision to enter politics, Buchanan writes, came from a desire "not for power, but to be part of a cause larger than and beyond the self," an impulse he would follow again in 1985, interrupting a highly lucrative ten-year career as a political commentator to join the Reagan White House as communications director. This memoir, however, ends on the day in 1966 that Buchanan began working for Nixon, and leaves for another book an exposition of his more troubling political battles—for example, defending Nixon at the height of the Watergate scandal, or opposing the Justice Department office that tracks down Nazi war criminals.

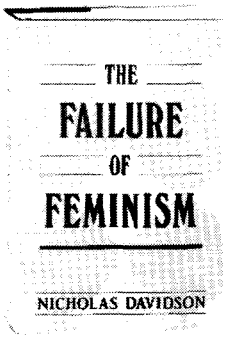
BUCHANAN, of course, had a purpose in producing this particular book at this particular time. Talk of the collapse of the conservative movement in the post-Reagan era, and even of what it means to be a conservative, is enjoying a certain vogue these days. Buchanan, too, believes the movement has lost its bearings, devolved into "many mansions." By focusing on his beginnings and on the future, he is trying to connect his root beliefs to the "duty of the political conservative."

Though the 1950's saw the incipience of a conservative renaissance in the world of ideas in America, readers looking in this book for the intellectual antecedents of Buchanan's conservatism will be disappointed (aside from an occasional quotation from T.S. Eliot and G.K. Chesterton, and the by-now requisite obeisance to *National Review*). Buchanan's is fundamentally a theological conservatism fostered by the traditional values amid which he was raised and educated. He conveys well the power and beauty of the Catholic Church in the days before mass in the vernacular, ecumenism, and altar girls. The Catholic faith, Buchanan writes, "provided us with what our own non-Catholic friends did not have: a code of morality, a code of conduct, a sure knowledge of right and wrong." In Catholic school, "our education began with the answers. We had the Way, the Truth, and the Light. Other ways were not equally valid. They were false."

With this came a number of coincident political convictions, notably that Communism was the enemy of God and man. It is from the abandonment by the Church in the

The Failure of Feminism

by Nicholas Davidson



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1960's of this uncompromising posture—when the "Church Militant was superseded by the Church Milquetoast"—that Buchanan traces the general decline in the authority of orthodox religious belief, a great social unraveling that gave rise to rampant secularism and "false religions" like feminism. Buchanan, however, still fervently holds the old-time beliefs as givens, and elevates them to the status of supreme certitudes. Which brings him to his current view: "Our political and social quarrels now partake of the savagery of religious wars because, at bottom, *they are religious wars*. The most divisive issues in American politics are now about warring concepts of right and wrong, of good and evil."

ONE's starting point is obviously an essential component of what one becomes, and Buchanan is surely correct to see religion as an anchor of one's politics. It is possible, nonetheless, to deplore the secularization of society and all the pathologies it has unloosed—from the excesses of the sexual revolution to the drug culture—without claiming for one's own beliefs and opinions exclusive spiritual or moral or ethical purity and seeking to infuse every aspect of public policy with them. Buchanan does not tell us if the "religious war" which characterizes our national politics is between the religious and irreligious or between the "traditional Christians" and everybody else. Problems arise, alas, in any case.

Certainly there are many decent people, including many conservatives, who are agnostic or atheist. Conversely, as Buchanan well knows, many mainline church groups are today quite liberal. They too speak with religious conviction when they urge unilateral disarmament, or an expansion of the welfare state, or sanctions against South Africa, or a prohibition on the death penalty. On which side of the "war" does Buchanan put these two groups of religious and irreligious?

Buchanan insists, moreover, against much evidence to the contrary, that there is no longer a "common moral code or common idea of patriotism" among ordinary Americans. He overstates this point to mask what is in his view the real cleavage, separating those who adhere perfectly to his ironclad sense of "what is truly morally evil" from those who do not, an apocalyptic formulation that excludes most Americans, not to mention most conservatives (including probably Barry Goldwater).

This becomes evident when Buchanan gets down to specifics, making every small political contest an apodictic one. The narrow concerns of the New Right—amending the Constitution to make unborn children "persons," explicitly to allow capital punishment, to establish English as the official U.S. language, to permit the scuttling of Supreme Court decisions by a two-thirds vote of Congress, to sanction religious instruction in the schools, and so on—are assigned here a moral weight indistinguishable from such first principles as defending democratic capitalism against Soviet-style totalitarianism. Noting that Congress has failed to overrule a Supreme Court decision outlawing prayer in public schools, Buchanan raises this specter: "A National Day of Prayer, conducted inside the classrooms of Christian teachers in open defiance of Supreme Court edicts, would send a message of political strength the Secular City could not ignore."

TO BE sure, there is much in Buchanan's agenda for conservatism that is appealing, including not only the Reagan Doctrine and a reduction of marginal tax rates but also efforts to defend traditional bourgeois values. But if the Republican party is to retain and even expand upon the Reagan coalition, democratic politics requires an appeal based on the broad patches of conservative consensus. There is in fact a conservative majority, no longer hidden. It coalesced as conservatives turned away from isolationism, nativism, elitism, and an exclusory Roman- and Anglo-Catholic world view and opened their ranks to ex-liberals and individualist libertarians, blue-collar ethnics and intellectuals, Jews and evangelical Protestants. Buchanan's language of "religious war," leaving as it does no room for compromise or diversity, threatens the new conservative coalition and could yet trigger a corrosive and ultimately self-defeating battle within the Republican party.

Traditions of Inquiry

WHOSE JUSTICE? WHICH RATIONALITY? By ALASDAIR MACINTYRE. *University of Notre Dame Press. 410 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by
RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

SINCE its publication in 1981, Alasdair MacIntyre's earlier book, *After Virtue,* has attracted a level of general attention seldom accorded to serious works in moral philosophy. The conclusion of that book is generally taken to be grim, even despairing. Nietzsche was right; public moral discourse is no longer possible; everything has descended into "modern emotivism," in which morality is nothing more than individualistic preference; the barbarians have been ruling us for some time now; the jig is up; the only thing to be done is to retreat into whatever communities still have some memory of the meaning of virtue. MacIntyre's final line: "We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict."

The present book is equally sobering, but its sobriety is directed toward resolution rather than resignation. Far from abandoning the modern world, MacIntyre now calls upon us to do battle for a tradition of virtue which, despite all, is alive, if not well. In making his case, MacIntyre does a good deal of historical backing and filling, and offers important revisions of judgments he entered in *After Virtue* and other writings. Throughout, he promises to address the issues in a manner attuned not to the guild of philosophical specialists but to the

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS *is director of the Rockford Institute Center on Religion and Society in New York and the author of, most recently,* The Catholic Moment: The Paradox of the Church in the Postmodern World *(Harper & Row).*

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educated general reader. For the most part, that promise is kept, although even the most literate and attentive will find sections of the argument heavy going.

LET US start with the apparently clumsy title of this book: *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Our culture, it suggests, is awash in conflicting theories of justice. Whose should we accept? According to MacIntyre, the great ambition of the 18th-century Enlightenment was to establish public standards by which all could agree on what is just or unjust, rational or irrational, enlightened or unenlightened. But the champions of the Enlightenment could not agree among themselves on what those standards or principles were. The Enlightenment thus broke up into several Enlightenments. One kind of answer was given by the French philosophers who were the authors of the *Encyclopédie*, a second by Rousseau, a third by Bentham, a fourth by Kant, and a fifth by the Scottish philosophers of common sense and their American disciples.

The widely acknowledged failure of the Enlightenment project prepared the way for the relativism, perspectivism, and emotivism of the now-dominant tradition that MacIntyre calls liberal individualism. But there is, he writes, an alternative to the Enlightenment, and to the liberal individualism that is its bastard product, and that is to recognize that there are *different* traditions of rational inquiry, with very different understandings of what it means to be rational.

Thus, where the Enlightenment project gets bogged down in interminable dispute over an illusory neutral or universal grounding of truth, and radical individualism ends up abandoning rational inquiry altogether, MacIntyre urges us instead to take our stand within *particular* traditions of rational inquiry which can then contend with conflicting traditions offering different accounts of, among other things, the meaning of rational inquiry. He proceeds to examine closely several such major traditions that are, so to speak, in play in the modern world.

First MacIntyre looks at the Aristotelian account of justice and practical rationality, which was shaped by the structures and conflicts of the ancient *polis*. Then, in much less detail, he notes the ways in which the Augustinian version of Christianity entered the medieval world in antagonism to Aristotelianism (though the two were synthesized by Thomas Aquinas who was, MacIntyre believes, able to liberate Aristotelianism from the narrow limitations of Aristotle's notion of the *polis*). But the discussion most thoroughly developed here, and the one that will present most readers with much unfamiliar history, is that of the Enlightenment in 17th- and 18th-century Scotland. The common-sense philosophy of such figures as Thomas Reid and Francis Hutcheson very impressively combined a Calvinist version of Augustine with a Renais-

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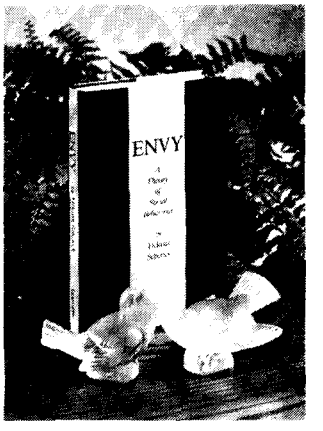
ENVY

By Helmut Schoeck



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Since 1965, Dr. Helmut Schoeck has been professor and the director of the Institute of Sociology at the University of Mainz.

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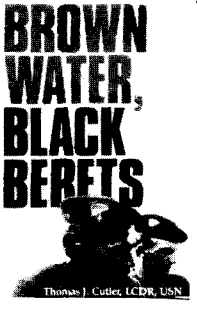

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sance version of Aristotle. Those who enjoy intellectual pyrotechnics will relish MacIntyre's account of how David Hume subverted the Scottish Enlightenment from within. After Hume comes modern liberalism, which, as MacIntyre argues and as many of its own adherents are now recognizing, has spelled not the end of all traditions but the formation of yet another tradition.

MACINTYRE knows that his is not an exhaustive treatment of traditions of rational inquiry. He does not, for example, treat the Jewish reconciliations of Torah with philosophy. He notes also that it would have taken a much longer book to include an examination of the Prussian-Lutheran tradition in which Kant, Fichte, and Hegel tried, majestically but unsuccessfully, to construct a universal mode of inquiry. And of course there are quite different worlds of Islamic, Indian, and Chinese inquiry with respect to which MacIntyre declares himself manifestly incompetent.

The fact that he does not include everything, however, is not a weakness. It is precisely MacIntyre's point that any claim to include everything is pretentious self-delusion. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are each participants in a particular, historically contingent, tradition, and those who flit betwixt and between in order to develop a more "universal" perspective are indulging in a frivolous mode of pseudo-cosmopolitanism.

This does not mean that the tradition of which one is a part is a matter of fate, or that the choice of a tradition is arbitrary. On the contrary, "a tradition in good working order" is to be valued to the extent that it is able to make sense of experience, to encounter and comprehend other traditions, and all the while to maintain enough continuity to be identified as a tradition. Although I do not recall running across the word "hermeneutics" in this book, most of the current disputes over the interpretation of texts and canons are engaged by MacIntyre in his lively depiction of the various ways in which traditions do battle with one another. Such contestation is essential: some win and others lose, but it is precisely the capacity to anticipate, respond to, and successfully incorporate criticisms from other traditions that marks the development of a living tradition.

WHERE does all this put liberal individualism, *the* modern tradition and one that is, not coincidentally, the declared enemy of tradition? As I have said, MacIntyre suggests that it is running out of steam. This does not mean that the modern world is on the edge of a radical turn toward moral and philosophical sanity. There is not a hint of such euphoria in MacIntyre's account. But he does seem to think that there is a chance of a *modest* turn toward sanity, that the theoretical and practical failures of liberal individualism have created a situation in which alternative traditions offering a more successful account of reality may begin to get a fair hearing.

There are, however, formidable obstacles, mostly in the form of entrenched ideas and entrenched institutions. The modern university is a prime example, according to MacIntyre—who, in his discussion of the condition of the universities, reveals just how far he himself has traveled from the reigning presuppositions not only of modern liberals but of most modern conservatives. Thus, whereas to most people the elimination of "religious tests" for faculty positions over the last two hundred years is thought to have been a great stride toward intellectual freedom and integrity, MacIntyre is not so sure. It *might* have been a great advance, had it led to universities becoming places of ordered intellectual conflict among rival traditions of rational inquiry:

> Instead, what happened was that in the appointment of university teachers considerations of belief and allegiance were excluded from view altogether. A conception of scholarly competence, independent of standpoint, was enforced in the making of appointments. A corresponding conception of objectivity in the classroom required the appointed teachers to present what they taught *as if* there were indeed

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shared standards of rationality, accepted by all teachers and accessible to all students. And a curriculum was developed which, so far as possible, abstracted the subject matters to be taught from their relationship to conflicting overall points of view. Universities became institutions committed to upholding a fictitious objectivity.

In sum, MacIntyre argues that the modern university has become a massive exercise in what Marxists call false consciousness. This development has been least harmful in the natural sciences, which developed as a relatively autonomous tradition of inquiry with a more flexible orthodoxy in the service of limited goals. It was most harmful in the humanities. There, the ideal of a "fictitious objectivity" has deprived those teaching the humanities of standards. It is no longer clear why some texts are more important than others, or why some theories are worthy of greater respect than others. In this connection, MacIntyre dismisses even the "Great Books" approach to higher education, in which students enter a cafeteria line of learning to get a little Socrates with their Sartre, or Marx with their Boethius. That approach, he suggests, exemplifies the liberal, market-oriented, catering to appetites, rather than disciplined engagement in traditions of rational inquiry. It is a form of "objectivity" appropriate to a culture determined to go mad and stay that way.

Whose Justice? Which Rationality? is a work of signal importance. I have offered here but the merest sketch of an argument that is usually convincing, always provocative, and has wide-reaching implications for the way we think about our historical moment. Alasdair MacIntyre is the perfect exponent of Richard Weaver's famous axiom, "Ideas have consequences." But the present work (like MacIntyre's earlier writings) leaves me, for one, giving thanks that ideas are not alone among forces that have consequences.

MacIntyre is a master of the history of ideas, but the history of ideas is not the master of history. In the case of the modern university in particular, one must ask whether, in drawing his sword against liberal individualism, with its assumptions about universal reason, MacIntyre has not overlooked a much more threatening enemy within the gates. That enemy, whose shorthand name these days is deconstruction, exults in the conflict of traditions that cannot be adjudicated by, cannot even be understood by, recourse to something that approximates dispassionate reason. It champions the cause of "radical incoherence," in which rational discourse is taken hostage to sundry political and ideological agendas, or simply submerged into the decadent pleasures of nihilism.

MacIntyre's caricature of the Great Books program seems similarly oblivious of the trenches running through entire academic departments in our Western universities. Obviously, dilettantish tripping through the classics is to be deplored; obviously, students should be thoroughly immersed in the logic and language of particular thinkers and traditions. But the student must first be introduced to them, and that introduction is one purpose of the Great Books. Even more fundamentally, the Great Books approach insists that there is a canon of texts by reference to which we can rationally discuss the canons of reason itself. The war that is now being waged against the very idea of a canon is also and inevitably directed against MacIntyre's own project, which clearly assumes a tradition of intellectual traditions.

As IN his treatment of the Great Books, MacIntyre also seems somewhat cavalier in his observations about the elimination of "religious tests" in the academy. He is right to note the "fictitious objectivity" that preserves its sense of superiority by simply eliminating from discussion any considerations that might disturb its complacency, but in the current intellectual wars—and, again, especially in the humanities—the champions of objectivity of *any* sort are very much on the defensive. Religious tests *per se* may still be excluded, but political and ideological tests effectively tyr-

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annize many academic departments. It may be that in his own life MacIntyre encounters only people with whom he occupies a shared universe of rational discourse—or at least a working agreement on how to discuss what such a universe might look like—but most of us in his line of work today run up against talk of "regimes of truth" (Foucault) and the confident claim that any notion of such a shared universe of rational discourse is, indeed, a "fictitious objectivity." The present book would have been better and stronger had MacIntyre addressed this plague.

Yet another set of questions must be raised. There are traditions of inquiry and discourse that may not be coherent enough to qualify for MacIntyre's catalogue, but are traditions nonetheless. Two such he rather derisively dismisses, and a third he does not even mention: the Judeo-Christian tradition, Western civilization, and the American experience. It is arguable, however, that all three are, in historical fact, traditions, and that they qualify as such by his own test of what constitutes a working tradition, namely, "beliefs, institutions, and practices."

For example, there are clearly practices that characterize the American experience, and those practices are embodied in institutions, and underlying those institutions there are, or used to be, beliefs. Nor is it the case, *contra* MacIntyre, that the American tradition is exhaustively or even adequately articulated in the terms of liberal individualism. This is not the place to develop the argument, but I cite it as an illustration of why MacIntyre's notion of tradition is too narrow and, one might say, intellectual. For one devoted to the importance of the historically contingent, MacIntyre is in some respects strangely ahistorical.

All that said, however, this remains a critically important book. MacIntyre helps us to understand why so many people are stymied today in articulating the beliefs that underlie their traditions of inquiry, practice, and public discourse. One enemy, he makes clear, is the delusion of false universality, the impulse to escape from historical particularity, the adherence to a tradition of anti-traditionalism. MacIntyre also helps us to see how and why that set of ideas has gained such intellectual dominance, and why now its string of victories may be—just may be—coming to an end. At the very least, MacIntyre better equips us to expose the stand taken by the proponents of anomie and ideological rage who would deny to others the right to take their stand.

From Ford to Adam Smith

THE SUICIDAL CORPORATION: HOW BIG BUSINESS FAILS AMERICA. By PAUL H. WEAVER. *Simon & Schuster. 270 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by GEORGE RUSSELL

The Suicidal Corporation is a provocative, often incoherent work that records the conversion of an avowedly neoconservative academic and business journalist into a strenuous critic of Big Government and Big Business alike. Paul H. Weaver, formerly of Harvard, the *Public Interest*, and *Fortune*, now sees American corporate history as a century-old conspiracy in which the great U.S. businesses have systematically lied about their motivations, objectives, and aspirations, and have ended by creating conditions antithetical to the survival of free enterprise. Among those who have been duped in the process are those stalwart defenders of American capitalism and Weaver's erstwhile friends and associates, the neoconservatives.

Weaver's journey is worth examination because, among other things, it points to a certain volatility of sentiment in some conservative circles, especially those claiming to believe in libertarian economics. A libertarian is, in fact, what Weaver

GEORGE RUSSELL *is a senior editor at* Time.

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A LITTLE LOVE IN BIG MANHATTAN
Two Yiddish Poets
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This double biography tells the story of Mani Leib and Moishe Leib Halpern—two prominent figures of *Di Yunge*, the extraordinary group of gifted Yiddish poets and writers who immigrated to the United States in the early decades of the century. The story of these opposing personalities describes the rich and vital cultural movement that embraced them both.

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claims to have become. From that perspective he now denounces U.S. economic "corporatism" (not very well defined, but akin to Italian fascism), decries the compulsive interlocking of business and legislative interests, and prescribes a sweeping reorganization of the American political and economic system to cure its manifold ills.

It is marvelous to contemplate that Weaver's conversion to his present views was engendered largely by a stay in the corporate communications department of the Ford Motor Company, where he had gone in 1978 to fight the good fight against the retreating myrmidons of Carterite regulatory authority. Weaver wanted Ford to put up its dukes; instead, he fell into a bureaucracy intent on cowering in the corner. "The people who ran Ford Motor Company did not believe in capitalism," he avers. Rather, they were intent on feathering their own nests and blowing whichever way the political winds were strongest. "This proud realism," he declares, "was part and parcel of a world view in which interests and deals are real, and principles and policies are illusions."

Weaver tells sad tales about Ford's public-relations tactics. The automaker, for example, concealed its vulnerable financial position in the face of Japanese competition even from sympathetic government officials (there could be No Bad News). He recalls with disfavor Detroit's flight to protectionism and bailouts (Ford failed to get one after Chrysler succeeded). In one pathetic grace note, he records how the head of Ford's corporate communications was unable to convince his own daughter that her Pinto was safe, and in the end decided to shell out for another car.

Revulsion was followed by revelation. After leaving Ford, Weaver eventually came to the conclusion that the American corporation had *never* been in favor of

> markets, limited government, private property, or the other values associated with the business cause. It had always tried to derive private advantage from public policy. It had never been the rock-ribbed, pro-market, straight-talking institution I had imagined.

Instead, a great cultural cleavage ran through American history. On one side, prior to the 19th century, lay the "American political tradition as we usually understand it—the world of Madison and Jefferson, market capitalism, limited government, and individualism." On the other side stood the Great American Corporation, a revolutionary and subversive form of organization dedicated, from the time of the railroad empires onward, to the finagling of private benefit out of public policies.

As part of their strategy to achieve that goal (Weaver's analysis continues), the founders of Corporate America invented the art of public relations, which, among other things, "reshaped the entire landscape of modern politics" by committing corporate discourse to "the language of social policy and social purpose." That language, says Weaver, is not the language of Adam Smith but of oligopoly, cartel, regulated monopoly—or, in the modern era, of tax loophole, investment credit, pollution regulation, anything governmental that will advance corporate or industrial interests. "What business finds compelling about big government is the carrot, not the stick," he concludes wryly.

It is amazing that we have all been duped for so long, especially since, in Weaver's view, the situation has recently gotten much worse—bad enough to warrant the term "suicidal" in his title. In their blind pursuit of institutional advantage, businessmen have gone so far as to forget to act as a self-interested *class*, instead pursuing public policies on taxes, regulation, and inflation that are designed to give transient benefits to one corporation or another while undermining the competitiveness and freedom of action of business as a whole.

But we are not quite at Armageddon. If U.S. business has opportunistically dug its own grave, salvation, in the form of "true" capitalism, is also at hand. Weaver cites two cardinal events of the new era: Richard Nixon's 1971 decision to free the value of the U.S. dollar from its postwar Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates, and the advent in the late 70's of economic deregulation, led by the airlines. The floating dollar, he argues, will ultimately open all of corporate America to international competition, eroding in the process its symbiosis with public policy (no

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mention here of protectionism). As for deregulation, and the sweeping advantages it produces for consumers, this will help to prevent any return of the bad old days of oligopoly.

Finally, Weaver hails the arrival not just of a new economic era but of a new political era, in which weak political parties, powerful communications media, and a more porous concept of congressional discipline will lead to a new "plebiscitary politics." As he puts it:

> The new plebiscitary politics is more ideological and conflict-ridden than the old consensus-oriented interest-group system. It is often anti-institutional and anti-establishment . . . plebiscitary politics is mercurial. Policies that look good to the electorate in one concept can suddenly look terrible the minute the news creates a new context. Thus plebiscitary policy has a powerful tendency to be incoherent. It often pushes in contradictory directions.

To Weaver, all this is good news, since it will, in his view, guarantee the non-corporate or anti-corporate order of "true" market economics. Under this dispensation, organized economic interests of the old type will be unable to emerge, and the all-too-visible hand of management will be replaced by the original, invisible hand of Adam Smith & Co.

PERHAPS SO. But what Weaver hails as a new form of politics also bears more than a passing resemblance to an authoritarian system masked as one form or another of populism. In fact, "populist" is a far more accurate name for the position Weaver has arrived at than the "libertarian" he prefers. Like most populist analyses, his book effects an incongruous amalgam of the complaints of the individualist Right with the complaints of the "little-guy" Left, in the process offering as many tips of the hat to Ralph Nader as it does to Jack Kemp. It is also unmistakably tinged with a distaste for the customary practices of democratic politics. Though the term and the concept of "public policy" is invoked often in Weaver's fast-forward history of corporate conspiracy, democracy—quirky, interest-ridden, promising a gradually expanding franchise—seems to have been edited out. This is an important omission, not least because the so-called free market, or democratic capitalism, is itself the product of a political decision—hence the need, from the time of Adam Smith to that of today's neoconservatives, to argue its often seemingly illogical case.

When it comes to the steps that Weaver considers necessary in order to maintain his "true" capitalist state, the author's recommendations range from the trivial—corporations should "Keep a Public-Affairs Diary," or "Create a Very Senior Management Position" to oversee public affairs—to the casually drastic. To eliminate "incoherence" in public policy, for instance, he proposes such sweeping transformations as the election of members of the House of Representatives to staggered four-year terms; abolition of the two-term limit on the presidency; the folding of independent regulatory agencies into the executive branch; and reform of the tax, trade, and monetary policy processes of the executive and legislative branches. These last, he notes, "are among the most chaotic in a chaotic governmental system."

They are, and perhaps deplorably so; but, like the other arrangements he would alter, they happen also to be constitutional. Here again one sees how Weaver's notion of a "libertarian" commonwealth, involving the radical subordination of the current American political system to a hypothetical economic goal, partakes of the classical, and classically disturbing, features of populism. And Weaver is a populist in this sense, too: what gives shape to his discussion is not his nostrums but his frustrations. This is what endows his account with its considerable energy and bite, and what links it with other expressions of populist or anti-establishment discontent all too palpable in the country at large. But it is also what makes *The Suicidal Corporation* problematic as a work of serious political and economic analysis.

Anti-Missile Defense

WHILE OTHERS BUILD: THE COMMON-SENSE APPROACH TO THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE. By ANGELO CODEVILLA. *The Free Press. 256 pp. $22.50.*

Reviewed by STEPHEN PETER ROSEN

AN emphasis on strategic weapons that defend territory and people rather than destroying them is the one substantive legacy that the Reagan administration might have left to American national-security policy. But it has been clear for some time now that the administration's strategic defense initiative (SDI) is not going to produce anything more than continued research at budget levels close to what might have been expected even before the President gave his speech announcing the initiative on March 23, 1983.

What happened? Why was so little achieved by what looked like a powerful presidential commitment to an idea whose time had come? Angelo Codevilla, now at Stanford's Hoover Institution, has written a book that provides his answer to that conundrum.

As an aide to Senator Malcolm Wallop (R.-Arizona) on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Angelo Codevilla made a reputation for himself in the late 70's by his habit of asking representatives of the U.S. intelligence community whether their strategic programs would work when we might need them most, namely, during a war with the Soviet Union. He found their responses unsatisfactory. He then went on to earn a second reputation by asking similarly direct questions of members of the American defense establishment: Are you in favor of developing and deploying anti-missile defenses or not? If not, why not? As with the intelligence community, the responses were again unsatisfactory.

Codevilla totally rejects the assertion that anti-missile defenses are strategically irrational. For him, the strategic task of any defensive

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system is not and never has been the perfect defense of the ten largest American cities against the simultaneous attack of several thousand Soviet nuclear warheads, since the Soviet Union would have to be virtually suicidal to contemplate such an attack. Rather, the criterion by which he measures a defensive system is the extent to which it would make the successful outcome of an attack on *military* installations look improbable to a Soviet planner.

The logic of Codevilla's position suggests that we should be trying much harder to understand Soviet war plans if we are to have any hope of learning how to thwart them. For example, if we were already at war with the Soviets, and they were contemplating a nuclear strike, what kind of strike would it be? What would they strike first? How might they be planning to disrupt our overall system of defenses, and how could we handle the problem? In short, what would be the real utility of strategic defense, given the Soviet way of war? Codevilla is very impatient with anyone who would deny that the actual, imperfect anti-missile defenses that could have been but were not built from 1953 on would have rendered the Soviet planners' task a great deal more difficult.

UNFORTUNATELY, in this book Codevilla does not do more than assert that defenses would be strategically rational. This is a pity, because he has much to say on the subject, and his analysis would have gone far toward strengthening his argument against the often-heard claim that the technology to mount a "successful" defense is not yet available.

What does it mean for a defensive technology to be successful? Codevilla maintains that technology is not a block to the deployment of a worthwhile anti-missile system. In a discussion that is bound to be too terse for the average reader, he reviews here both past and present anti-missile technologies and concludes that any of them, had they been deployed, would have "worked" against contemporary Soviet missile systems. It is wrong, he shows, to reject a weapon just because one can imagine a "responsive threat" that would eventually defeat it. Most weapons work for a while, and then are made obsolete by the countermeasures they eventually call into being; but that does not mean that they are failures.

Of course, it also does not mean that they are successes. Surely Codevilla would not argue that *any* level of ABM technology is worth deploying. Here again one wishes he had discussed at greater length how U.S. defensive and Soviet offensive technologies have interacted in the past, how they could be expected to interact in the future, and how that interaction might serve U.S. interests. Had he expanded his criticism of imagined "responsive threats," for

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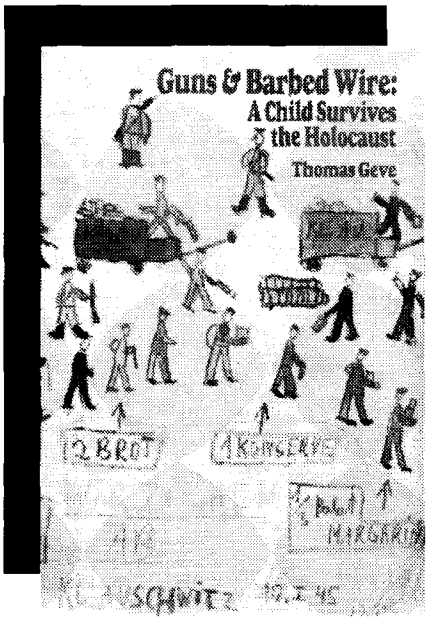
ONLY TWO GERMAN BORN CHILDREN were known survivors of Buchenwald. One of them was 15-year-old Thomas Geve who had spent nearly two years in Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen and Buchenwald, where he was liberated by Allied forces in April, 1945.



Too weak to leave immediately, Geve spent time drawing color pictures of daily life in the camps. And in 1958 he wrote his memoirs in English which were published, without illustrations, only in Israel. This new U.S. edition includes 17 full color pictures drawn by Geve with stumps of colored pencils left behind by the Nazis.

The strength and uniqueness of GUNS & BARBED WIRE, as Lore Segal points out in her review, is the lively, matter-of-fact, youthful tone which will not be denied. And somehow, incredibly, amidst unspeakable suffering, he manages to give us an impassioned affirmation of life.

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example, he might have noted that it takes time and money to buy all of the new weapons necessary to defeat an adversary's anti-missile systems. Forcing the Soviet Union to spend that time and money could be a victory in itself.

IF Codevilla is right that anti-missile defenses are strategically rational and technologically possible, and have been so for many years, and if the President was behind the development of such a system, why, then, did the Reagan administration refuse, in practice, to deploy it? Codevilla's answer is surprising. What led to inaction, he argues, was not the ideological opposition of the Left, powerful though that was, or the lingering influence on the military of Jimmy Carter's defense policies. To the contrary, the only heroes in Codevilla's book, other than Malcolm Wallop, are the senior defense officials of the Carter administration. The decisions taken in early 1980 by Harold Brown, Carter's Secretary of Defense, did more (says Codevilla) to advance the state of anti-missile defenses than the March 1983 speech by Ronald Reagan. What is more, Democratic Senators rallied more readily to the pro-SDI cause than did John Tower and John Warner, the defense experts of the Republican party in the Senate.

The culprits, Codevilla writes, are to be found closer to home:

> Conventional wisdom wrongly assumes that far Left groups such as the Union of Concerned Scientists or Sidney Drell's Stanford arms-control program are the principal brakes on the Reagan administration's zeal for the SDI. . . . The real brake is Reagan's and Weinberger's total deference to senior military officers, and the unwillingness of senior military officers to confront the organizational and budgetary questions that a commitment to strategic defense necessarily implies.

It was, in other words, the "iron law of bureaucracy" that led professional military men to put their personal interests ahead of national security. Because deploying anti-missile defenses would take money away from the traditional programs they favored, the chiefs of the military services consistently opposed the construction of any such system.

In Codevilla's view, the only way to have overcome their opposition would have been to create a fourth service, a Defense Force, with the mission and the money to start building prototypes of an anti-missile system to be deployed as soon as possible. But for this, the nation's political leaders would have required a degree of intelligence and bravery they conspicuously lacked.

Codevilla's diagnosis thus comes down to a harsh and sweeping condemnation of President Reagan and his administration, the senior officers of the American military, and the Republican party leadership. He is saying that the armed services of the United States behaved in a manner venal and corrupt, and the political leadership of the Republican party in a manner betraying intellectual and moral bankruptcy. If Codevilla is right, then there is considerably more that is wrong with our country and its military and political culture than the absence of anti-missile defenses.

IN FACT, however, Codevilla's diagnosis, which on many strategic and military points is both acute and just, on this point is intemperate and unfair. Producing military innovation has always been a slow, hard process. In the case of anti-missile defense, as I can testify from ten years' experience advocating some such system for the United States, the military establishment is not so bureaucratically self-interested as Codevilla alleges, but is bedeviled by a number of genuine political disagreements on the strategic urgency of SDI. In any case, hurling insults at the defense community is a tactic of doubtful benefit to the cause that Codevilla rightly favors, and it is a recourse all the more to be regretted in one who has so much to offer us on strategic issues.

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